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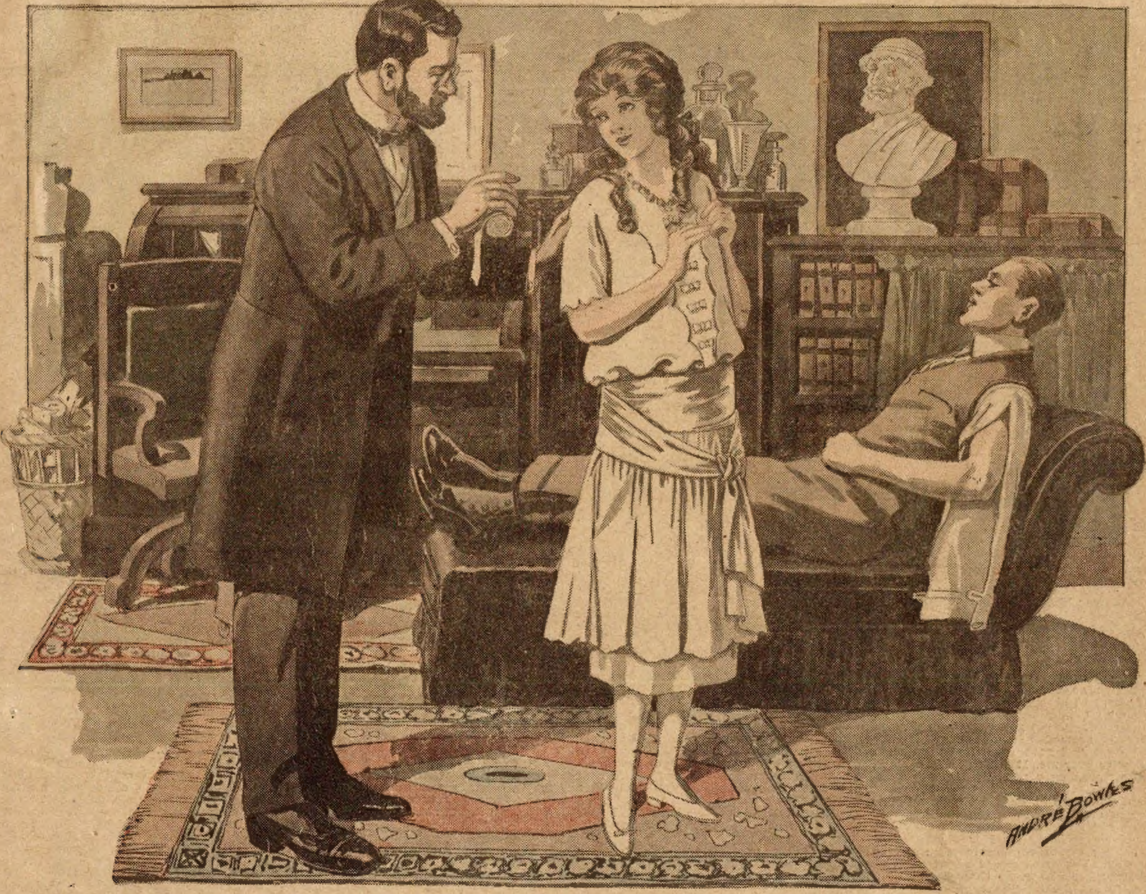

An Evolution of Fate

Or, The Grip of Heredity

By Emma Howard Wight

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CHAPTER I.

JOHN LEWISTON lay dying in a squalid room on the fourth floor of a wretched lodging-house. Outside snow was falling and the wind-tossed flakes against the dingy window panes were like ghostly, beckoning fingers. Or so they seemed to the somber fancy of a girl, about fifteen years of age, who stood at the window looking drearily out at the whirling whiteness of the snow.

She was very thin and pale, her eyes were a gold-flecked brown, her lips full and curved. Her hair, the color of her eyes, fell in curling masses about her shoulders making a dash of color against her shabby dark gown. The meager fire in the small stove was far from sufficient to heat the room, which was bitterly cold. The girl shivered from head to foot as a fierce blast of wind shook the window.

"Oh, I am so cold, so dreadfully cold!" she whispered, moaningly.

"Valerie," came faintly from the bed.

The girl started, turned and slowly went up to the bed. Her eyes dilated in a frightened manner as they fell upon the ashen face of John Lewiston.

"Father, are you feeling worse?" she asked, falteringly.

A wan smile crept over his lips.

"Worse?" he repeated. "Child, I am dying." She shrank away from him tremblingly. "I shall not live to see the close of this bitter, gloomy day." There was a moment's silence. The girl stared at him helplessly. "Where is Lester?" he asked.

"He went for a few coals," Valerie explained.

At that moment the door opened and a boy, carrying a scuttle half filled with coal, came into the room. Valerie gave a sigh of relief. The boy went to the stove and replenished the fire, then he came up to the bed. His face, also pale and thin, with tawny, gold-flecked eyes and full, curved lips, was the counterpart of the girl's. It was evident that they were twins. The boy's face changed as he looked at his father and an exclamation left his lips.

"Yes, my boy, it is the end," said John Lewiston.

The boy's lips quivered and his eyes filled with tears. He manifested more feeling than the girl who trembled with fear, more than with grief.

"I had hoped to live until I received a reply to my letter to your aunt, Charlotte Granger," continued John Lewiston, with a sigh. "I wrote her that I had but a short time to live and that you, her sister's children, would be left penniless and alone in the world. She has refused to even communicate with me for a number of years, but I cannot believe that she will refuse to succor the children of her only sister. She has declared that no money of hers shall ever come to you children as long as I lived, but I hope it will be different when I am dead."

"Why has she treated you like that, father?" asked Lester, resentfully. "What has she against you? You have been unfortunate, but that should not be held against you."

"Unfortunate!" murmured John Lewiston, a spasm of pain convulsing his features. "Yes, unfortunate indeed!" He paused a moment, and then added, "but I alone am to blame. I have brought upon myself, my wife and my children suffering and poverty. Your mother died of a broken heart. I loved her, but I broke her heart. I came into the world with a curse upon me—the curse of heredity." His eyes, filled with a great pain and a strange fear, were lifted to the boyish face of Lester who regarded him in astonishment. "Oh, my son, my son, I shall go from this world into eternity with a prayer upon my lips that the curse has not descended to you, that no touch of it taints your blood."

The wondering amazement upon the boy's face changed to something like fear.

"Oh, father, what do you mean?" he asked.

"I will tell you," said John Lewiston. He had grown calmer and he lay for a few moment rallying his strength. "I have always intended to tell you, to warn you before I died," he continued.

He turned to Valerie. "Leave me alone with your brother for a while, my child." The girl turned from the bed and went out of the room into her own, a closet of a room, where she crouched, shivering, upon the bed.

John Lewiston turned his haggard eyes again upon his son.

"Listen to me, Lester," he said. "And as long as you live remember what I say to you now as the shadows of death thicken about me."

"I shall remember always, father," declared Lester, with great earnestness.

"There is a fatal taint in the blood of the Lewistons," said John Lewiston. "It has descended from father to son—the lust to gamble. I have been a gambler since I was twenty-one years of age, my father and grandfather were gamblers before me. I had two brothers. Both were gamblers. One died by his own hand, the other was killed in a quarrel at cards. I broke your mother's heart, I squandered her fortune, the birthright of you and your sister. I am dying in poverty, leaving my children penniless. And why? Because I inherited the curse which has damned the Lewistons. I was born with it in my blood."

Lester's face paled as he listened. He had never known anything in his short life but poverty, hardship and suffering. His mother died when he was six years old, but he could remember that she was always pale and sad and grief-stricken. He had often wondered, as he grew older, why his father had never prospered, why his life was such a sad failure. And now, at last, he understood. A great fear came upon him. He grew white and trembled.

"My son, God in pity grant that the only legacy I leave you is not the curse of heredity," said John Lewiston with unspeakable sadness.

Lester cowered for a moment, then he drew his slender figure erect and a look of determination drove the fear from his face.

"If it should be in my blood, father, I can still fight it," he declared, bravely.

"Yes, you must fight it," said John Lewiston, but he sighed as he spoke. He remembered how he had fought the clamoring devil within him, but it had proved too strong and had conquered him. It was the call of the blood with those of his race and he knew its terrible power, its awful strength. He looked at the handsome, noble face of his son and his very soul was wrung with agony. He suddenly lifted his arms in a wild supplication to heaven.

"Oh God, avert the curse!" he cried. "Do not let it fall upon my son. Turn it aside from him no matter where it fall."

As the last words left his lips, his arms fell heavily, a convulsive shudder passed over him from head to foot, then he lay still.

The boy bent over him.

"Father!" he cried. "Father!"

There was no answer. With that wild prayer upon his lips, John Lewiston died. As the boy stood gazing awestruck upon the still face, Valerie came into the room and crept to his side, white and shaking.

"Lester," she whispered. "I am so frightened. "I was sitting in my room when it seemed to me I heard father praying. And such an awful fear came suddenly over me. It seemed like a black shadow was over me. I tried to fight against it, to get away from it, but I could not. It was only a shadow, but it seemed crushing me to the earth."

She hid her face against his shoulder, shuddering violently. Her strange, unreasoning terror communicated itself to the boy. His arms closed about her and he drew her closer, as though to shield her from some threatening danger. There was silence in the death chamber, broken only by the quick-drawn breath of the girl and the moaning of the winter wind.

Suddenly the stillness of the form on the bed attracted the attention of the girl. She learned forward, staring affrightedly at the white upturned face.

"Father!" she whisepered.

The boy drew her gently back.

"He cannot speak to you," he said. "He is dead."

CHAPTER II.

MISS CHARLOTTE GRANGER sat in her handsome but rather somberly furnished library, a thoughtful, rather stern look on her face. She was a woman about fifty-five years of age, tall, thin, but with a certain stately bearing. Her eyes, hair and brows were very dark, her features aquiline, the lips very thin and determined. She wore a black gown of heavy lusterless silk, and her long fingers glittered with jewels in quaint settings. The French windows in the room opened to the ground and through them could be seen the snow-covered lawns and trees encrusted with icicles.

Miss Granger sat at her desk with the household account book open before her, but she did not seem able to concentrate her attention upon it. Her jeweled hand rested listlessly upon the page, but she was gazing straight before her, a far-away look in her eyes.

Charlotte Granger was a quiet, self-contained woman, generally believed to be cold and unloving. She took from a drawer in the desk the letter John Lewiston had written her a few days before his death, in which he besought her aid for the children of her sister. She was thinking of a day more than sixteen years ago when her fair young sister had gone away, the bride of John Lewiston. How radiantly happy she looked! But there were some present who, knowing the fatal taint in the blood of the Lewistons, had pitied her and feared for her. But in Charlotte Granger's heart there was no pity, but wild envy and bitter jealousy, for she loved John Lewiston. No one had ever guessed her secret, certainly not the man himself. Charlotte Granger was a woman of a concentrated nature, who loved but once in a lifetime. The fear of betraying her secret had made her seem colder and harder than she might otherwise have been. It was that fear—for she was a proud woman—which caused her to crush the longing to go to him when she received his letter, to claim for her own the last hours of his sad and wasted life. But what she did was to send a check and a letter accepting the care of Lester and Valerie Lewiston. And John Lewiston was dead when that communication arrived.

Miss Granger looked up from the letter with a slight start as the door opened and a middle-aged woman, in the dress of a maid, entered the room.

"You wish to see me, Miss Granger?" she queried.

Miss Granger placed the letter in the drawer before replying. She had meant to destroy it—that pitiful letter, written on the cheapest paper, the faint, irregular writing painfully suggestive of the weakness of the hand that penned it. But somehow she could not bring herself to destroy it. She locked the drawer in which she placed the letter and turned to her housekeeper.

"Have two rooms prepared, Martha," she said. "My nephew and niece, Lester and Valerie Lewiston, will be here this evening." Martha started and glanced quickly at her mistress. "They will make their home with me for the future," Miss Granger explained. "John Lewiston is dead."

There was a moment's silence; then Martha said, softly:

"Miss Louise's children—and they are coming here to live?"

"Yes," replied Miss Granger, calmly, taking up her pen. "John Lewiston died a pauper, leaving his children at the mercy of the world."

Martha winced. She had loved pretty Louise Granger, and the words seemed to her cruel.

"I'll see to the rooms, Miss Charlotte," she said, turning to go out.

As the door closed upon Martha, the pen dropped from Miss Granger's fingers and her dark brows met in a troubled frown. What if the son of John Lewiston should inherit the vice that had been in the blood of the Lewistons for more than a generation? Miss Granger was a self-contained woman, but she shivered at the thought. A strange dread swept over her for a moment and she trembled and grew weak. Had she analyzed the feeling, she might have regarded it a premonition of evil—what might be termed a warning. But she was not a superstitious woman and no such thought occurred to her. She shook off the feeling in a moment, almost with impatience. She was an intolerant woman, and it seemed to her impossible that any disturbing element could come into her calm and well-regulated life. Even if the son of John Lewiston and her nephew did inherit the lust of the gambler, the fatal taint that had descended from father to son among the Lewistons, she felt that she was able to cope with it. She would so order and regulate the life of her nephew, so shape it, that the vice would never develop. His very dependence upon her would make it all the easier to shape his life as she saw fit. There was other blood in the veins of Lester Lewiston besides that of the unfortunate Lewistons—good, pure, honest blood. Training, environment, the absence of temptation would prove stronger than heredity.

That was the manner in which Charlotte Granger in her egotism reasoned, assuring herself that it was possible for her to mould and direct and control the life of a human being. After which she dismissed the matter from her mind and gave her attention to her accounts. If her calm self-possession was at all disturbed later, as she sat awaiting the return of the automobile that had been sent to the station for her nephew and nice, there was no outward sign of it.

The Granger residence was a handsome house in a fashionable suburb of Baltimore. It had belonged to the Gangers for more than fifty years. Charlotte Granger had no near relative with the exception of the Lewiston children. She was a rich woman, having greatly increased the fortune which had come to her at her father's death by judicious speculation and prudent investment.

As she sat waiting the coming of the boy and girl it suddenly occurred to her that she should make a will. She must run no risk of having her money squandered in gambling as her unhappy sister's had been, for there was just a chance that heredity might prove stronger in the son of John Lewiston than anything else. If she died without making a will her property would divert unreservedly to her next of kin. She must send for her lawyer and attend to the matter.

As she came to that decision the portieres were put aside and the butler announced:

"Mr. Lester and Miss Valerie Lewiston."

Miss Granger glanced up sharply as a pale, shabbily clad boy and girl entered the room. She stared in astonishment as she saw how marvelously alike they were. They came toward her slowly, shrinkingly and hesitatingly, as though uncertain of the greeting they would receive, the sort of welcome that would be accorded them. There was something very pathetic in their bearing. It was so suggestive of the misery, poverty and humiliation that had gone to make up their lives. A tenderer, less self-contained woman than Charlotte Granger would have taken them in her arms and spoken gentle, tender words of welcome. But she was made of sterner stuff, and, while the attitude of the children awoke in her a feeling of compassion, it also repelled her. She arose and went forward to meet them. She kissed Valerie and shook hands with Lester, speaking a few formal words of welcome. The boy regarded her wistfully, trying to find some resemblance to the mother he had devotedly loved. He felt a pang of disappointment when he saw there was none.

"You are so wonderfully alike," said Miss Granger, glancing from one to the other. "Are you twins?"

"Yes, we are twins," replied Valerie.

BE SURE and read **"AN EVOLUTION OF FATE; or, THE GRIP OF HEREDITY,"** in this issue. In next week's Ledger you will find two splendid leading stories, **"GOLD BEYOND THE DESERT; or, SEEKING YELLOW METAL,"** by Wilder Anthony, and a new boy's story, **"BILLY BARTH'S PLUCK; or, A YOUNG DETECTIVE'S TRAIL,"** by Captain Jack Judson. These are rattling good stories. These will be followed by some of the finest stories ever offered Ledger readers. Here are some of them:

"A Dog's Own Diary; or, The Story of 'Jags,'" by Frank H. Channon.

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"International Intrigue; or, America's Secret War," by Marquis James.

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She spoke with an air of self-confidence that caused Lester to glance at her in surprise. The warmth, the luxury of the brilliantly lighted room had acted like a stimulant upon the girl, and already the old wretched life seemed fading away. Miss Granger rang the bell and summoned Martha to show Lester and Valerie to their rooms. She led the way up the stairs, and outside the door of Valerie's room she stopped and looked at them with a very tender light in her eyes. Then suddenly she put her arm around Valerie and kissed her.

"Forgive me, my dear," she exclaimed. "But I loved your mother very much."

"Oh, indeed!" murmured Valerie, rather indifferently.

"You knew and loved my mother?" said Lester, softly, and Martha, chilled by Valerie's unresponsiveness, turned to him quickly.

"Yes," she replied, "I was a maid here when your mother was a girl."

Lester held out his hand to her and there was something like tears in his eyes.

"I love you already because you loved my mother," he declared, and Martha kissed him.

A little later Lester, dressed in a fine suit of clothes he had found laid out for him, knocked at the door of Valerie's room. She opened the door, and he stood staring at her wonderingly, without speaking. She wore a new black gown, dainty and pretty. Her cheeks were softly flushed, her eyes very bright. She was smiling.

"Why, how nice, how pretty, you look!" exclaimed Lester at last.

Valerie laughed softly, happily. Lester started a little. He had never heard her laugh like that before.

"Oh, Lester, it is all so wonderful!" she exclaimed, as she met his questioning eyes. "My warm, beautiful room! My lovely new clothes—everything! And to think that it's going to be like this always! Oh, it seems almost like a dream! How happy we shall be!"

The boy was silent. There was a shadow on his face. He was thinking of the revelation made to him by his father on his deathbed and the fear that had clutched at his heart then, drained the color from his face.

The girl looked at him, startled.

"What is the matter, Lester?" she exclaimed. "You look so strange."

He made an effort to recover himself and looked at her with a smile.

He made an effort to recover himself and looked at her with a smile.

"I—I was thinking of father, Valerie," he replied.

Valerie shivered and paled.

"I want to forget the past," she declared. "It was so wretched, so terrible. I have never known what it meant to be happy. I want to be happy."

Her voice faltered, tears of self-pity filled her eyes. The boy looked at her very tenderly, very compassionately. Then gently and tenderly he drew her to him and kissed her cheek, while a prayer went up from his very heart that sorrow would never come to her through him.

CHAPTER III.

JOY sat in a great leather chair before the fire in her father's office. She was a fairylike child of twelve years of age, with an exquisitely fair face, eyes of heaven's own blue, a mouth like a flower and long hair of pale gold, soft and fine as floss silk. She was dressed all in white, her wonderful hair falling unconfined about her shoulders. Doctor Ware, coming into the office, went up to where she sat, looking down upon her with tender admiration.

"Joy, darling," he murmured, laying a caressing hand on her hair.

She looked up at him smilingly.

"I was waiting for you, papa," she said.

He gathered her up in his arms, his lips on her hair.

"My Joy!" he whispered.

At that moment the office bell rang. Doctor Ware put Joy gently back in the chair and went to answer. In the pale twilight outside a boy was standing.

"I wish to see Doctor Ware, if you please," he said.

"I am Doctor Ware," replied the physician. "What can I do for you?"

"I slipped on the ice and fell, and I think my arm is broken," the boy went on to explain.

"Come in and let me look at it," said Doctor Ware, and the boy entered, pausing a little uncertainly, for the room, lighted only by the fire, was shadowy.

Doctor Ware switched on the electric lights and then turned and looked rather questionly at the boy, whose right arm hung limply at his side.

"My name is Lester Lewiston," said the boy. "I live a few doors from here."

The physician looked at him with more interest.

"You are Miss Granger's nephew?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Now we will look at your arm," said Doctor Ware. "It is broken—badly fractured," he said, after he had made a brief examination of the arm. "It must be set, and I must find some one to hold it."

"Let me hold it, papa," said Joy, emerging from behind the big leather chair.

Lester started and looked at Joy with

a wondering admiration in which there was a touch of awe. There was something heavenly in the beauty of the fair, white-robed child with the cloud of pale gold hair.

Doctor Ware hesitated a moment, then he smiled.

"Very well," he said. "But you must be brave and self-controlled."

"I will," declared Joy, quietly.

"Sit down on the couch," Doctor Ware said to Lester. "Do you think you can bear the pain, or shall I give you an anesthetic?"

"I can bear the pain, I think, sir," replied Lester, and his face flushed and his heart beat quicker as Joy gave him an approving look. It seemed to him that with her beside him he could bear anything.

"All right," said Doctor Ware, as he turned away to prepare the splints and bandages.

Joy stood beside Lester and held the broken arm very carefully and tenderly in her little delicate white hands while the doctor set it. In after years that scene was destined to come back to Doctor Ware. The handsome boy, his face very white, but never wincing nor uttering a sound; the beautiful, angel-faced child, her blue eyes resting compassionately on the boy's face. There came a time when Doctor Ware felt tempted to curse the night when Lester Lewiston first came into the life of his daugher, Joy.

Doctor Ware's wife, whom he had adored, died when Joy was born. She was a Southern woman, came of an old, blue-blooded Virginia family. She had never been very strong, and when the baby came she died. For some months after the death of his beautiful wife Doctor Ware could not bear the sight of the child for which she had given her life. Aunt Liza, the old colored mammy who had come with young Mrs. Ware from her Virginia home, had entire charge of the baby. One day she went boldly in the library, where Doctor Ware sat brooding over his grief, with the baby in her arms. She went up to him and laid the child on his lap.

"I want you jest to look at dat thar baby, massa," she said. "She am booful as an angel."

The child had been sleeping, but suddenly she opened a pair of wonderful blue eyes and looked up smilingly into her father's face. A thrill went through him. He caught the child to his breast with something like a sob. Mammy looked at them and nodded her head complacently.

"She am gwine to be yo' joy, massa," she declared.

Doctor Ware looked at the old darky, and for the first time since his wife's death he smiled.

"We will name her Joy, Aunt Liza," he said.

Little Joy grew more beautiful every day and entwined herself closer about her father's heart.

"I'll call tomorrow and see how your arm is getting along," Doctor Ware said when the arm was set and the sling adjusted about Lester's neck. Joy had slipped back into the big chair before the fire.

Lester murmured some words of thanks as he went toward the door. The big chair hid Joy and a sense of desolation seized upon the boy. Doctor Ware closed the office door and went up to Joy.

"Tired, darling?" he asked.

Joy did not answer. Doctor Ware bent over her. Her fair head rested against the back of the chair; her eyes were closed. Doctor Ware drew a sharp breath as he realized that she had fainted. As he lifted her in his arms a feeling of resentment against Lester Lewiston swept over him, though he knew the boy to be blameless. He was not more than a minute in restoring Joy to consciousness. As her blue eyes looked up at him wonderingly, he said:

"You fainted, darling; that was too great an ordeal for you. I should not have permitted it."

"I am sorry, papa, that I was so weak," said Joy. "A doctor's daughter should be brave." She glanced about the office. "He has gone?" she murmured.

"Yes," replied Doctor Ware. "He has gone, and I almost wish he had never come," he added, grimly, with an anxious glance at the lovely pale face against his shoulder.

"He is very brave, isn't he, papa?" said Joy.

"Oh, he's game all right," replied Doctor Ware. "He knows how to bear pain and make no sign." He glanced at her a little curiously. "You seem to have taken a liking to that boy, Joy?"

"Yes, I have," she replied, very simply.

That night, as Joy lay in her white bed with Aunt Liza sitting beside her as she always did until Joy fell asleep, Joy told her about Lester Lewiston.

"Don't you think he is a brave boy, mammy?" she asked.

"Some folkes am lak dat, honey," the old darky replied thoughtfully. "Dey kin suffer, and suffer pow'ful, and you nebber head so much as moan frum 'em. That war Mirandy on de plantation down in ole Virginny. De oberseer—dat war in slave times—war gwine to hab her boy, Tim, whopped. Mirandy, she beg de oberseer to whop her 'stid ob Tim. Dat oberseer laff—he war a bad, cruel man—he tell Mirandy he war willin', but she gotter keep purfectly quiet—dat de fust time she make any fuss he gwine to whop Tim wos'n he fust 'tended. Mirandy, she say all right, so dey whop her shameful. Mirandy she nebber onct open her mouf to whimper."

"How could she bear the pain like that, mammy?" asked Joy wonderingly.

"Well, honey, I reckon it war jest de love fo' Tim in her heart dat guv her de power," replied Aunt Liza.

Joy lay quiet for a moment, thinking.

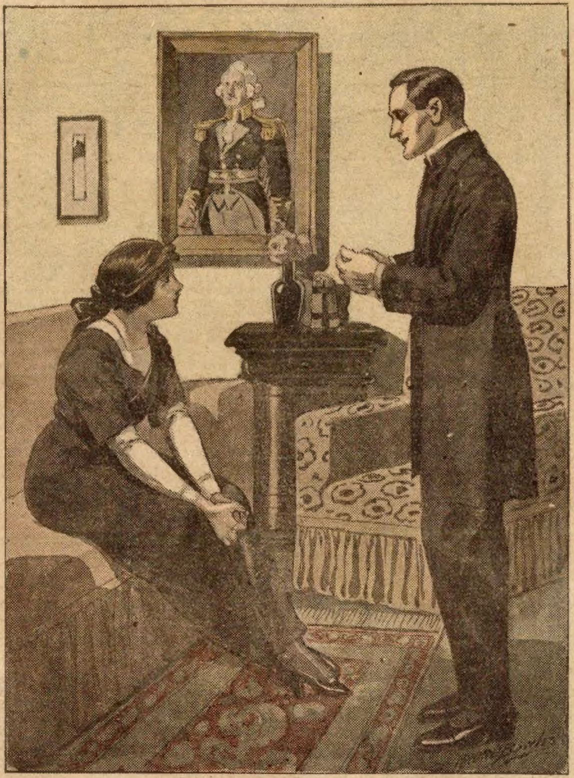
"That's a big kind of love," she said at last.

CHAPTER IV.

As LESTER came into the room Miss Ganger looked up sharply and questioningly, while Valerie utter a startled exclaimation at the sight of his injured arm. Lester explained how he had fallen and broken his arm and gone to Doctor Ware to have it set. He was interrupted by the entrance of Holman, the butler, who informed Miss Granger that her lawyer, Mr. Warfield, was in the library waiting to see her. She arose at once and left the room.

Lester then told Valerie about Joy, Doctor Ware's beautiful little daughter.

"She is so beautiful, Valerie," he declared. "She looks like one of God's angels."



"My name is Blair."

Valerie laughed.

"I never heard of any one being as beautiful as an angel, Lester," she declared.

"She looks like the pictures I have seen of angels," protested Lester. He arose. "I feel a little sick. I'll go lie down," he added, and went out.

Valerie settled herself more comfortably upon the purple velvet couch and looked about her with dreamy content. She had grown very pretty. She was no longer thin and pale. Her creamy skin was pink-tinted on the cheeks, her gold-brown eyes had a soft brilliancy, her figure was slim and girlish, but no longer thin.

A young man, dressed as a clergyman, who came quietly into the room, looked at her with a flash of admiration in his handsome dark gray eyes. As the girl met his eyes she flushed.

He came forward, holding out his hand.

"You are Miss Valerie Lewiston, Miss Granger's niece?" he said.

"Yes." Valerie arose and shook hands with him. She thought him very handsome, with his slender, erect figure, fine-cut features, dark gray eyes and wavy, chestnut hair. He was the pastor of the church just across the way and she had heard him preach several times. He had a wonderful eloquence that fascinated the girl without especially appealing to her from a religious standpoint. Religious training and church going had formed no part of the dreary life of the gambler's children.

"My name is Blair," the young minister explained.

"Oh, I know who you are!" exclaimed Valerie, with a smile that gave a fascinating brilliancy to her pretty face. She seated herself, still looking up at him, and he, after a moment, took a chair near her. "I often go to your church. I like to hear you preach very much."

"Thank you. I am glad you do," declared Adrian Blair, very sincerely.

He flushed at the girl's naive flattery. It gave him a strange thrill of pleasure. The slim girl, with her gold-brown eyes and vivid lips, attracted him. She was hardly more than a child, and yet, it seemed to him, there was a vivid suggestion of dawning womanhood about her.

Adrian Blair had arrived at the age of twenty-six and had never been in love. When quite young he had felt a great desire to enter the ministry. He had devoted himself to that purpose, with the result that at twenty-six he was pastor of a prominent and fashionable church. The handsome young minister was exceedingly popular with the women of the congregation, and he often grew very weary of the attentions lavished upon him, especially by the young women. He was brought into contact with a great many beautiful and attractive women, but he remained unscathed. He was far from realizing that in fifteen-year-old Valerie Lewiston he had met his fate and how strangely their lives were to be interwoven.

Valerie had been forced into premature womanhood by the cruel suffering she had undergone. It had developed her far more than it had her brother, Lester. He was still a boy, but the hotbed of suffering had ripened prematurely the nature of the girl. As she met the gray eyes of the young minister the self-consciousness of womanhood stirred within her, and all of the child died.

In the meanwhile, Miss Granger had gone to the library where her lawyer was awaiting her. He came forward to meet her, a thin, well-groomed man, with a sallow face and keen blue eyes. After they had shaken hands, Miss Granger said:

"I sent for you, Mr. Warfield, to consult you about making a will."

The lawyer bowed.

"You wish me to take your instructions now?" he inquired.

"Yes, I want the will made at once," replied Miss Granger, very decidedly.

Warfield arose, went and seated himself at the writing table, drawing a pad toward him and taking up a pen.

"I wish to divide my properly equally between my nephew, Lester Lewiston, and my niece, Valerie Lewiston," began Miss Granger. "But," as the lawyer was about to make a note, "with this difference. My niece, Valerie, when she comes of age, is to have the entire control of her share of the property. My nephew's share is to be held in trust, the income alone to be at his disposal and under his control." As the lawyer glanced at her a little questioningly, she added: "I wish to take precautions against my nephew's squandering his share, should he inherit the passion for gambling that is hereditary in his family. You know how my sister's fortune went, Mr. Warfield?"

The lawyer gravely inclined his head.

"Yes," he replied. "And I commend your wisdom in guarding against yours being squandered in the same manner. Your nephew is a fine boy," he hastened to add, as Miss Granger's brows met in a troubled frown, "and he may not inherit that unfortunate tendency, or, if he does, it may never develop."

Miss Granger's brows cleared.

"That is the way I have been thinking," she declared. "But I consider it wiser to be prudent."

"Undoubtedly," agreed the lawyer.

This capital story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you if you send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

NEVER AGAIN.

For years I worried lest I'd lose the cover
  Of hair which hides the apex of my dome;
But up to date it somehow seems to hover
  Quite closely, fondly, in its happy home.
For years I worried lest I'd lose my molars—
  I knew another set would cost me cash;
And yet today, as if to shame my dolors,
  They still are bravely masticating hash.

For years I worried over next year's garments,
  And wondered where I'd raise their price, and how;
But I must own that, spite of all my torments,
  I haven't gone quite naked up till now.
For years I worried, worried and was certain
  That next year's sun my face would never know;
But even now I'm far from calling "Curtain!"
  I feel as young as twenty years ago.

For years I worried lest some day a woman
  Might catch me napping, and so marry me;
One did, but—well, I found her rather human,
  And I am none the worse that I can see.
So here and now I make a resolution,
  And speak my future purpose clear and bold;
I'm done with worry as an institution—
  I quit the worry propositions, cold!

* * *

Stung

"I see you survived the Christmas festivities," said Poyer to Obbs.

"Yes," answered Obbs. "Congratulations are in order. I got stung only about eight times."

"How stung?" asked Poyer.

"Oh, four persons sent presents to me to whom I sent nothing, and I sent presents to four persons who sent me nothing. Of the two classes I don't know which is the worse.

"The four who sent us presents took an unfair advantage of us and the other four imposed on us. Those who sent us presents and to whom we sent nothing gave us no warning. They blew no whistle. The bell wasn't ringing. They didn't try to stop. They ran us down with big fat presents at the last minute, when it was too late for us to retaliate.

"The other four did just the opposite. They contrived to give us the idea that they were going to give us something.

"One day our little girl came running in to tell us that Agatha, the little girl next door, was going to give her a lovely ring. We paid no attention to that, but the talk about the ring was continued and handkerchiefs and a silk purse were added on.

"At that my wife was taken with the spirit of the thing. She began to be impressed and then I participated in the general panic. I scurried to the junk shop and bought some junk for Agatha, which I thought would keep the obligation from being quite so great.

"Agatha's ma pulled the same stunt on my wife. Agatha's ma was seated at her window apparently sewing, and when my wife glanced up with the remark, 'Sawing wood, I see,' she retired in confusion. Then it dawned upon my wife that Mrs. Upton was making a Christmas present for her!

"It was the same with the boys.

"The old man also impressed me with the fact that friendly neighbors looked good to him. For a long time I lay awake at night thinking of the pile of material blessings the Uptons were going to heap upon us. I determined to give back blow for blow.

"We sent three wagonloads of stuff to the Uptons' house. They never came across with a single thing. And our wagons had to wait their turn to be unloaded. The way the wagons were lined up at that house was a caution! So we weren't the only ones who got worked, although we find that small consolation."

* * *

Looking Backward.

What a lot of bloodshed could have been saved if Noah had left himself and family out of the ark!

THE DEATH RING

Or, IN WAR-MAD EUROPE

By Augustin W. Breeden

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CHAPTER VI.

WAR.

THAT night at midnight Harry returned from Paulograd. Rosalys was sitting on the veranda waiting for him. She looked pale even in the light of the crimson porch lamp.

"Then you have heard the news?" her brother said.

"No, I have heard no news," replied the girl. "Oh, Harry, what news?"

"War!" said Harry, succinctly. "The Empire has declared war on one of the Balkans; Russia has begun to mobilize to come to the rescue of her little neighbor; Germany has demanded that Russia postpone mobilization, and has sent a demand to France asking what her attitude is going to be. Of course, you know what the attitude of France will be."

"France will go with Russia, of course," said the girl, "and what will Italy and England do?"

"God only knows!" replied the young man with a sigh. "It looks as if all Europe will be at war in another week."

"But Altruria will not be invaded?" queried the girl.

"That is the worst of it. We will be right in the path of the Imperial army. It is thought in Paulograd that the Emperor will not hesitate to march his army right across this happy little princedom. Moreover, there is a bumper crop of wheat and more than the usual number of fat cattle in Altruria this year, and the Altrurian wheat-bins are bursting with the unsold wheat of two previous years. It is said the Emperor wants all this for his army—and listen ——" He leaned over and all but whispered it in the young girl's ear: "They want Doctor Kyork's famous emanatoria. I just learned today that he can treat twenty thousand soldiers a oay, and you saw what cures he can work. Little sister, there will be war here—right here!"

"Oh, that explains it!" cried the girl, not heeding his last words. "Listen, Harry! Tonight, at dark, a man came on a motorcycle and whispered something in Victor's ear. I heard only the words: 'War,' 'Your mother' and 'General Stanislaus; then Victor groaned, 'My God!' and turned and told me goodby and disappeared on the motorcycle. I understand it now. They will have to fight for the emanatoria."

"Yes," murmured the young man compassionately. "Yes, little sister, there will be war right here, and Victor will be in the midst of it. You knew, of course, that his mother is the principal owner in Doctor Kyork's sanatorium?"

"Yes, I knew it!" The girl's voice was hardly a whisper.

"Rosalys," said Harry, "I think I will take you in my Curtiss and get you out of here tomorrow morning, before the impediments become too great. For myself, I mean to return and help Victor fight for his sanatorium. Victor is the best friend I ever had and I mean to stick to him."

"You needn't go to take me out," said the girl quietly. "I am going to stay here myself."

"You?"

"Yes, I am betrothed to Victor, and my place is near him, if I can be of any help to him."

"You are a brave little girl—but let's get to bed now. In the morning I will motor into Paulograd again and get what news I can."

That was Friday night, July 31st. The next morning Harry motored into Paulograd and did not return till noon. He confronted Rosalys in the hall.

"Do you know who it is that has been flirting with you for the past month?" he demanded

"No one has flirted with me," replied the girl with a show of dignity.

"Oh, put it that way if you like," said the brother. "Do you know who Victor Scananbourg is?"

"Yes."

"You do?"

"Yes, he is the son of Doctor Kyork."

"There you are mistaken. He is the Crown Prince of Altruria."

"No?"

"He is, as sure as I stand here. He is the Crown Prince and his mother is Queen of Altruria. I could not believe it at first. I went to his villa early this morning. I found the house full of soldiers. They told me I would see him at the headquarters of General Stanislaus. I found him there dressed in an officer's uniform and giving orders to General Stanislaus himself. A jam of people had gathered outside in the street. Old Stanislaus begged Victor to go out and speak to them. When he did so he was received with the vivas of ten thousand throats. 'Long live Prince Rupert Victor! Long live the King of Altruria!' was what they shouted. I didn't speak with him, but came away to tell you. The war has been a terrible shock to his mother, and she is ill in bed, and may not recover."

The young girl did not speak, but stood staring at her brother, pale as death.

"Did he propose marriage to you?" asked the brother.

"Yes," replied the girl, "we were engaged in a general way, but no day had been set."

"Of course, you realize now that you two can never be married. A prince cannot contract a binding marriage outside of royalty—you knew that?"

"Of course," replied the girl, faintly.

"If he married you, you would be his morganatic wife; and that, according to our American standards, is the same as no wife at all. You understand the situation, do you not? He could marry another woman with you already his wife. Indeed, he would be compelled to take a second wife in order to have an heir to his throne."

"I understand," murmured the girl.

"You will return all valuable presents, including the engagement ring, today," commanded the brother. "Return them without any explanation—no explanation is necessary under the circumstances."

"Of course not," breathed the girl. Then she suddenly burst out: "Oh, I understand now what he meant last night when he said: 'I cannot act according to my will nor according to my love, but must act in the interest of others.' He said he might never see me again. Of course, he knew that I would know who he is today, and that I would never let him see me again."

"Rosalys," said the brother tenderly, "Don't feel bad. It ought to be some consolation to you to know that he loves you, even if he can never marry you. Of course, he never made a dishonourable proposal to you?"

"Never!"

"He is a gentleman. I mean to stick by him and fight for him, if he will let me. I suppose now you will let me take you out of the country?"

"I will consider it," replied the girl. "I must have time to think. What is the war news this morning?"

"Russia still mobilizing; war between Germany and France practically certain; Italy, England and Turkey, still uncertain. The council of state for Altruria met last night, under Victor, his mother being too ill to attend. After an all-night session, so I learned, they adopted a policy of absolute neutrality. The passes through the mountains will be guarded and every attempt will be made to prevent hostile troops crossing the country. Every able-bodied man in the country will be called to the colors today. There will be a desperate fight, I am afraid."

"Poor Victor!" murmured Rosalys. "No, Harry, I will not leave. There may be need of nurses for the soldiers. I will stay."

A messenger on a motorcycle rode up the drive toward the house, and the maid brought in a cablegram. It read as follows:

New York, July 31, 1914.

Harry V. Rollins, Jr.:

You and Rosalys come at once. Delay is dangerous. The war threat has already ruined me. Cable, if you can, date of coming. HENRY V. ROLLINS.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LEAGUE OF DEATH.

"YOU must let me take you out of here. You must go home to father," insisted Harry.

"I cannot go," replied the girl sadly, "at least not yet. Please cable father that we will be at home later—cable him our sympathy in his loss."

So the young man motored into Paulograd, filed a cablegram, which he could hardly hope would be sent out, and then went round to the intelligence office to get the news. The news he got that sultry afternoon was dark enough—all Europe was rallying to the colors.

In the Morganplatz, near the royal palace, he saw eight men lined up against a wall to be shot. They were German, Austrian and Russian spies, all intent on getting hold of Doctor Kyork's wonderful secret. The order was given to fire while Harry was passing, and the eight were no more.

Harry stolled into a military court. He saw Madame de la Huy, whom Victor had described as an international spy, behind the bar. Harry heard the sentence. "You will be held in the dungeon under the palace, or in some other safe and convenient place, until the re-establishment of peace in Europe." He shuddered to think of her captivity.

He found Prince Rupert Victor at military headquarters, and after some difficulty managed to come before him.

"I came to offer my service and the service of my biplane to your highness," said Harry awkwardly.

"Your sister—where is she?" asked the Prince.

"At the villa."

"Had you not better use your machine to get her safely out of this country?" suggested the Prince.

"She refuses to go."

"Very well. I shall see that she has every protection. A hundred troops will be stationed about your house as a guard. Yes, I will accept your service. I am organizing a 'League of Death' of the same kind that they have in France. I myself will be head of the league and colonel of the air scouts. There will be work to do, I'm afraid. My country is full of spies, and I fear an attack on the sanatorium from dirigibles at any time. It will be our business to defend the sanatorium with our lives. Meet us here tonight at midnight."

With that the Prince turned to the next man who was waiting to speak with him, and Harry retired from the presence. There was great excitement in the narrow streets of Paulograd that day. Foreigners, of whom there were not less than ten thousand in the city, were trying to get away by any possible means. The well-to-do were leaving in automobiles; the poor were allowed the use of trains, both freight and passenger, to transport them as far as the frontier, and there they were dumped, as the trains did not dare go beyond the frontier for fear of being captured and commandeered by some one of the warring nations about them. Meanwhile all telegraph lines had been cut, and the state of things in outer Europe was left wholly to be guessed at. Harry met American acquaintances who could not cash their American letters of credit at the Paulograd banks and who, thought rich, were absolutely destitute. He offered to take some of them to his villa and entertain them there till better times, but they were one and all intent on flying the country.

Late in the afternoon, but while it was yet light, Harry took an extended flight in his biplane. He wanted especially to reconnoiter the mountain passes to the west toward the Empire. There were two such passes, through each of which a branch of the Altrurian National Railroad passed. At the most northerly and principal one of these passes Harry saw two regiments of soldiers, garrisoning the fort there and swarming about the actual pass beyond the fort toward the frontier. Just beyond the frontier he saw hundreds of men and women and children standing in little, inactive groups on the railroad and right-of-way, or walking slowly down the long grade toward a little, huddled mountain town not far away. The Atlrurian Railroad had brought them this far, but the imperial railroads were evidently too busy mobilizing troops to care to lend their service to stranded tourists. Those people formed a pitiable spectacle down there, and Harry thought of all the horrors and widespread discomforts of war. He wished that he could persuade Rosalys to leave the country, but he knew her nature well enough to realize that persuasion was useless. He thought of his father's sudden failure, and felt very sad.

At the southernmost of the two passes he saw much the same scene repeated. Then as he turned back in the lowering twilight toward Paulograd he saw that the whole valley princedom was a-swarm with people, hurrying hither and thither like ants when a hill is disturbed. Every male citizen of Altruria from fifteen to fifty-five was mustered into the army and given a Mauser. Women and children could be seen at work in the fields everywhere, harvesting the wheat and sugar beet and cutting hay.

Harry returned home at dark and ate his dinner alone. Rosalys was feeling indisposed and would not come down that evening. A party of Bostonians, a young man and three old maid aunts, who had got only to the frontier and found no train to carry them on, had returned to Paulograd by freight car and hired a cabby to bring them out to the villa. They were of the number that Harry had urged to come during the day, the young man being a casual acquaintance of his. These people, however, declined to come to dinner, on the ground of dishabille and fatigue, and had a late tea served them in their rooms. At ten o'clock Harry left for Paulograd, feeling miserable and dejected. Here was his sister's happiness destroyed by an insane European custom, his father's fortunes ruined by a silly European war, and here were all these people destitute and the whole world out of joint. He thought of how happy he and his sister and poor Prince Victor had been together only forty-eight hours before, and cursed the makers of war and the supporters of royalty.

That night, between the hours of midnight and morning, he, with thirteen other young men, led by the Crown Prince, took the oath of the League of Death of Altruria. The oath was in the following terms, and it made a deep impression on Harry as he repeated it and realized its awful significance:

"I agree to give my service and the service of my aeroplane in the defense of Altruria, and of the treasure of radium held by Doctor Kyork in the Royal Sanatorium at Poulograd. I agree to ram any foreign dirigible of whatever nation that shall violate the neutrality of Altruria, and to die in the air if need be. I agree to go where commanded by Prince Rupert Victor of Scananbourg and Paulograd and do his command unquestioningly, no matter at what cost to myself or loved ones.

"I agree to the penalty for disobedience, which is understood to be instant and disgraceful death at the hands of a firing squad."

All this Harry agreed to. In the mood he was in he felt that death was not such a terrible thing, after all, since the world was completely out of joint anyway, and there was no happiness for him and his.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BATTLE IN THE AIR.

I THINK it was a hollow wooden horse with a score or so of armed warriors inside it that caused the destruction of Troy. The Imperial forces tried something like the same ruse on poor little Paulograd on the morning of Sunday, August 2, 1914—that memorable Sunday morning when people awoke and found all Europe at war. Harry Van Rollins had hardly let fall the last word of his death vow from his lips when a telephone bell in the room rang sharply, and a lieutenant picked up the receiver. An instant later he dropped the receiver as if it were hot.

"Attack of a dirigible on the sanatorium!" he shouted. "Machine has landed on the roof and cast anchor."

"Up men and at them!" rang out the commanding voice of Prince Rupert Victor. "And remember your vows."

In a moment the hall was in confusion. Men were running hither and thither. Rapid orders were shouted and responded to. In the misty dawn Harry saw General Stanislaus dash down the street toward the sanatorium on a beautiful black steed and at the head of a company of horsemen. Harry had provided his biplane with a ramming beak for piercing the dirigibles and also with what is called in modern warfare in the air, a "death hook"—that is, a bomb in a case that is swung out from an aeroplane and over the side of a Zeppelin or other dirigible and then is drawn rapidly up. When a hook at the top of the case strikes the vulnerable side of the dirigible, the bomb explodes, destroying the dirigible. Three of the other aeroplanes were so provided, but two of them were mere pleasure craft as yet. No specific commands were given by Prince Rupert, but each man leaped into his machine, for all knew what their work was. Each machine carried one passenger, who was armed with a 100-caiber big-game magazine rifle. There were thus seven machines and fourteen men. Prince Rupert had turned his Curtiss over to a lieutenant and was driving a giant armored Bleriot which carried a machine gun.

One after one in the foggy dawn the aeroplanes sped along the smooth surface of the parade ground and rose, circling above the dark city. Harry was the first one up. The first thing that he saw as he cleared the tall houses was a giant dirigible anchored on the broad, flat roof of the Royal Sanatorium. The sight made him think queerly of the wooden horse of Troy. He drove his biplane straight toward her at a tremendous speed. Then as he neared the sanatorium he became suddenly aware that the whole building and the streets around it were full of fighting men. Shot after shot was fired. A daring Imperial airman had landed a machine gun on the roof of the sanatorium and was raking the street below. Harry saw this. He also saw a dozen other Imperial airmen come swarming up by ladders through the skylight and make for the car of the dirigible; the reception they had got below was too warm for them. At the same instant it fairly began to rain bombs in the street around the sanatorium. Harry saw a man casting loose the anchorage; he also saw the crew of the machine gun trying to turn it round and train it upon him. Then he rammed that dirigible amidship, at the same time wrecking his own machine. There was a prolonged crash, a burst of withering flame, and Harry and his gunner found themselves in the midst of a veritable inferno on the roof of that building. Men ran shouting and fighting through the smoke and flames of the burning aircraft like demons incarnate. A dozen Altrurians, reaching the roof by way of a fire-escape, fell upon the crew of the machine gun and annihilated them. Another squad of Altrurians fought hand to hand with all the other Imperials who had not been killed by the explosion or burned to death. Harry and his gunner joined these and fought with short swords and pistols at close range.

In five minutes the roof was cleared of the enemy, and Harry had an opportunity to watch what was going on in the air above. Those dirigibles above had at last ceased to throw down that shower of bombs, upon seeing the fate of the one anchored on the roof, and had taken to speedy flight. They were three in number, as Harry now had time to observe, and they were not trusting themselves to horizontal flight, knowing the superior speed of the aeroplane, but were climbing upward in a sort of spiral, while their gunners kept up a plunging fire on the pursuing aeroplanes.

Harry watched with admiration as the hindmost of the big dirigibles was overtaken by two aeroplanes at once. The two aeroplanes attacked her bravely, one from each side, like sparrows attacking an eagle. Then suddenly the Curtiss biplane which had formerly been used by the Prince was disabled by the fire from the car of the dirigible and turned sideways and fell like a shot to the ground. At the same instant, however, the Prince's own machine, the Bleriot, shot up over the enemy's airship, dragged a death hook into her, and escaped undamaged from the explosion. The big dirigible was so nearly straight up over the sanatorium at the time that some of the burning debris and dismembered bodies fell within twenty feet of Harry. In that moment his admiration at the bravery of his fellow airmen was suddenly changed to disgust at the terrible consequences of war.

He watched the other two dirigibles escaping rapidly to the south and felt rather glad they were not brought down. It is not a pleasant sight to see it rain blood and the limbs and trunks of men.

CHAPTER IX.

MANHOOD AGAINST KINGHOOD.

HARRY and Prince Rupert Victor met shortly after this aerial battle and exchanged congratulations. Also, Doctor Kyork met them and told all he knew about the attack on the sanatorium.

"I had just risen, according to my five o'clock custom," he said, "when I saw three tall men pass down the hall toward the strong room where the radium not in use is kept stored. I rushed out and followed them. Two white-aproned traitors allowed themselves to be held up and delivered over the key to the strong room. One of the tall villains drew a pistol on me and bade me put up my hands. I put them up, all right, but I threw the rays from the Death Ring on all five of the men as they stood there, and at the same time raised a hullabaloo to give the alarm. It was then that my East Indian servant ran to me to report that there was a Zeppelin on the roof—think of the audacity of it! —and I told him to phone military headquarters. You people know the rest better than I do."

"Yes, we know the rest of what has passed," replied the Prince, "but no man can see ten minutes into the future in these surprising times. Harry, I want a private audience with you as soon as I can get time. Will you kindly wait? It may be an hour or two."

Harry waited for two hours. He telephoned his sister meantime, telling her what had taken place. She told him that guards were stationed all about the villa and that the three old maids had been badly frightened till they learned why they were there.

"But, brother," she said, "why did you join that terrible League of Death? Two of your number are already killed, you say. You may be the next to go—oh, why did you join it?"

"For the same reason that you insist in staying in Altruria," replied the brother. "Loyalty to Prince Rupert Victor."

"Oh," sighed the girl.

"Listen, sister," said Harry, in a lower voice. "He has asked to talk with me privately. I think it is something concerning you, perhaps. What may I tell him for you?"

"Tell him I care for him as I always did, but that he must not try to see me again."

A royal messenger came into the lobby of the hotel from which Harry was telephoning.

"Captain Harry Van Rollins wanted by his grace, Prince Rupert Victor!" called out the messenger, and Harry left the telephone and followed him. Two minutes later he found himself alone with the Prince in a richly furnished room.

"I received the little trifles and the ring which your sister returned to me," said the Prince. "Of course, I understand the significance of her action. I quite agree with you two on the subject of morganatic marriages. I myself am the child of such a marriage. I have never for a single day of my life been out from under the curse of it. There is another prince, my half-brother, Prince William of Thone. He is now fourteen years old. He is—what shall I say?—he is feeble-minded. Well, he is worse than that; his feeble-mindedness is of the worst type, to put the case mildly. Yet he is, on his father's side, an underlord of the Empire and pays tribute to it; and so the Imperial government has insisted on his rights over mine as the Crown Prince of Altruria. He is now called the Duke of Thone, and his province lies just beyond the boundaries of Altruria inside the Empire. My mother in her lineage acknowledges no king or potentate as her overlord. Her forefathers, who were native chieftains, wrested the valley provinces of Paulograd and Scananbourg from Sultan Solyman the Magnificent, and have ever since held them against the encroachment of every power. The two provinces taken together were named Altruria by my father, Doctor Kyork—you will find they were not so named on most of the maps of Europe."

"Now, tell your sister this: I am not a prince in the ordinary acceptance of that term in Europe, because I acknowledge no king or emperor as my overlord. I am, upon the death of my mother, an independent tribal chieftain, of a line of chieftains who have never allowed their country to be invaded nor asked the protection of any greater power. The ownership of this vast treasure of radium which my father, Doctor Kyork, has put into my possession, now renders me, if I can keep it, one of the richest and most powerful monarchs of Europe. Even if I trade it off to a congress of the powers, it will only be for a guarantee of independence. Now, with this power in my hands, I mean to flout all custom, to court no European princess, to yield nothing to the Empire, but to make your sister my one true wife and queen, if she will accept me."

"I feel that she will, under those conditions," said the brother, too happy in his sister's prospect of happiness to think of being politic.

"There is one great obstacle," said the Prince sadly, "my mother's opposition. Still, Doctor Kyork is in favor of the match; and I think he can overcome her objections. Now, I mention this objection only to give your sister another guarantee. In case my mother's objection cannot be removed, or in case the monarchs of Europe refuse to recognize my right to marry whom I please, I shall abdicate and Doctor Kyork will declare a republic and call for a fair and free election. In that case, I would be made president of the republic and would be maintained as such, in spite of all efforts of the Empire and of my imbecile brother's partisans. I want to tell you also that my mother does not object to Miss Rosalys for any personal dislike. She has declared with tears in her eyes that she loves her like a daughter. But she remembers the sad fate of poor Alexander of Servia, who gave his life for marrying Draga Mashin against the wishes of royalty less than ten years ago."

He held forth the returned engagement ring, a circlet of blazing diamonds with a ruby as centerpiece.

"Please beg your sister to accept again this ring. And tell her that I now propose she shall be my one true wife, even if I have to abdicate all power and go to America as a poor teacher of language. Tell her to wait, and when these cruel wars are ended I will make her my own."

A royal messenger flung himself into their presence.

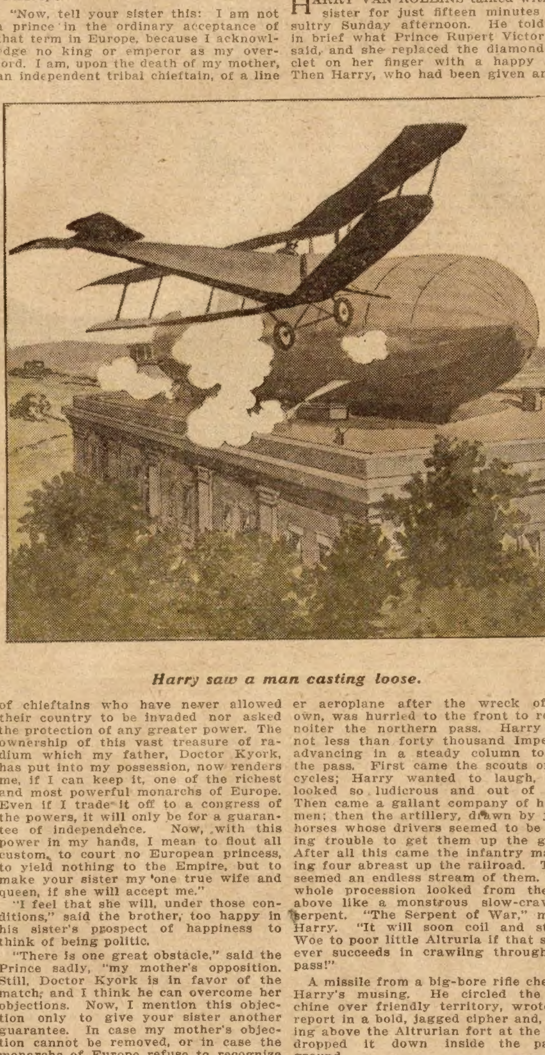
"The Imperial forces are mobilizing in great power on the frontier before the northern pass," he panted. "The Emperor, as overlord of Paulograd, Scananbourg and Thone, demands the right to march across those provinces in order to meet what he calls the common enemy."

Prince Rupert Victor leaped to his feet and his eyes blazed. "Fling the Emperor my defiance," he cried, "and tell him that the ancient freeholds of Paulograd and Scananbourg have never been invaded since my fathers drove Sultan Solyman from their borders, and that I, as a free Christian king, will maintain the frontiers inviolate!"

CHAPTER X.

THE SERPENT OF WAR.

HARRY VAN ROLLINS talked with his sister for just fifteen minutes that sultry Sunday afternoon. He told her in brief what Prince Rupert Victor had said, and she replaced the diamond circlet on her finger with a happy sigh. Then Harry, who had been given another aeroplane after the wreck of his own, was hurried to the front to reconnoiter the northern pass. Harry saw not less than forty thousand Imperials advancing in a steady column toward the pass. First came the scouts on bicycles; Harry wanted to laugh, they looked so ludicrous and out of date. Then came a gallant company of horsemen; then the artillery, drawn by jaded horses whose drivers seemed to be having trouble to get them up the grade. After all this came the infantry marching four abreast up the railroad. There seemed an endless stream of them. The whole procession looked from the air above like a monstrous slow-crawling serpent. "The Serpent of War," mused Harry. "It will soon coil and strike. Woe to poor little Altruria if that snake ever succeeds in crawling through the pass!"



Harry saw a man casting loose.

A missile from a big-bore rifle checked Harry's musing. He circled the machine over friendly territory, wrote his report in a bold, jagged cipher and, sailing above the Altrurian fort at the pass, dropped it down inside the parade ground.

Then he returned to his scouting. The bicycle men appeared to be useless in those rugged mountains and were soon proceeding slowly back down the railroad dump. The infantry debouched in a little, narrow, huddled mountain village, to which the tourists had walked a day or two before, and pitched their tiny tents in a narrow potato field above the town. The field was filled so solidly that the tents appeared as thick on the ground as cabbages in a market garden. When the field was full, the tents were placed on the steep mountain slope and in the narrow streets and garden-plots of the village. The officers had evidently taken the leading hotel of the village, a sort of summer resort hotel, for their headquarters, for there were several autos and motorcycles before it, and men constantly came and went. An interesting sight, though not from a military standpoint, were the movements of the villagers and tourists. They could be distinguished even at a great height by the fact that women among the tourists carried umbrellas and the native women wore shawls over their shoulders. These people were marched out upon the railroad dump and then started in a slow-moving procession down the grade toward the river.

Harry kept wondering why no trains were used in bringing these troops up or in taking the non-combatants out. Flying farther west into the enemy's country, he saw the reason. The high railroad bridge across a mountain river had been completely demolished. Harry understood now why Prince Rupert Victor's big armored Bleriot had been sent west early in the morning. The Imperials had built a small wooden bridge across the narrow stream down near the water, and now their supply train was having a tremendous struggle to get up the steep embankments. There were miles and miles of baggage trains yet to come over—the seemingly endless tail of that serpent of war. Those refugees would have to camp in that narrow valley, exposed to flying shot and shell and to all the horrors of war, until the last wagon of the baggage train got over.

Harry circled his machine, climbed still higher in the air, and returned toward the pass. Here he saw great siege pieces being set up, howitzers and mortars of various descriptions. It was plain that the enemy intended to try to reduce the Altrurian fort at the mouth of the pass to a junk heap before attempting to take the pass by storm. Harry immediately transmitted this news to the fort. Night came while he was on his third reconnoitering tour, and he was called in.

At eight o'clock Prince Rupert Victor addressed his League of Death men.

"You must take your rest now, men," he said, "all but two who will guard the sanatorium in Paulograd. At dawn we will begin dropping bombs on the enemy's batteries. You will also attack in midair any aircraft of the enemy that attempts to drop explosives inside our lines. I must now resign my place as leader of the air-scouts to Captain Harry Van Rollins, upon whom I bestow my rank of colonel. I would gladly continue your colonel, but General Stanislans is needed to command troops at the southern pass, and so I must take supreme command here. There will be a battle at dawn tomorrow—do your duty."

Harry slept little that night in spite of the fact that he had not slept at all the night before. Whenever he did doze he immediately began to dream of that horrible "Serpent of War" which he had seen crawling up toward the pass and which he knew would strike in the morning. At three he was getting his bombs ready, and at four he had given his men their orders. As the clouds were driven out of that high mountain pass by the piercing cold dawn winds, Harry dropped the first bomb from the Prince's armored Bleriot. It missed its mark. He circled and dropped another, with better effect. Then a crowd of sharpshooters, who had stationed themselves high up the snowy sides of the surrounding peaks, began to pour an accurate fire into the aeroplanes, and, dropping one bomb each, they were forced to increase their elevation.

The dropping of the first bomb was a signal for a general fusillade. At once the big howitzers opened up on the little Altrurian fort, and it answered with a stream of screaming shrapnel. The fort and the Imperial batteries were not in sight of each other, but were screened apart by jutting crags, and for two hours the artillery battle raged, much ammunition being wasted on both sides. The shrapnel, however, did deadly work whenever it hit. One of two batteries, was silenced, several buildings in the village were blown to pieces, and one shell fell in a little, huddled group of villagers waiting disconsolately for the end of the serpent's tail to be drawn across that pontoon so they could get out of the danger zone. Men, women and children were blown to pieces by that shell.

Harry and his brave subordinates stayed in the air and kept dropping bombs as near the siege batteries as possible. In the course of two hours two of the aeroplanes were brought to earth, both falling inside the enemy's lines. One had been called in and sent on scout duty, so that now there were just two left in the air, Harry's machine and one other. At seven in the morning a signal from the fort warned these to come in, as their destruction would leave the country wholly unguarded. Out of fourteen men that had taken the oath of the League of Death, exactly half that number had given their lives. The league was indeed a League of Death.

At eight in the morning, Van Rollins having reported the presence of large stores of ammunition being hauled up the railroad pass by horse power, Prince Rupert Victor loaded a box car with dynamite and asked for a volunteer engineer and one other man to push it through the pass and down the track into the enemy's stores and there explode it. A dozen men came forward, though the enterprise meant certain death. Among the volunteers was the young American of the three old maid aunts. Harry collared him and dragged him from the scene. No one but the enemy and two

(Continued on page eight.)

Isobel, the Czar's Spy

Or, EMPIRES AT STAKE

By T. C. Harbaugh

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CHAPTER XIII.

CORNERED.

A MAN lay on a cot staring at a window through which came the faint gloaming of the day. He was thin-faced and haggard-looking and the appointments of the room were none of the best. The man's years might have been thirty. This was shown by his face, but there were streaks of gray in his unkempt hair which now and then he brushed back from his brows.

"I must get away," he groaned, and his voice had a hollow sound. "I must take his advice and leave Berlin. But how can one do so when they are watching him?"

The lone man was Von Tuyl, the War Minister's coachman, the person who had driven Von Roon on the fatal night. Ever since his last interview with Strouse he had looked at nothing but the almost bare walls of his room. They had been the boundaries of his world, a world of distrust; they had hemmed him in like some old-time prison where men were permitted to die after a long incarceration. Nobody had come to him. No footsteps had rattled on the creaky staircase. It was as though he had been forgotten, shut out from all remembrance. No one seemed to think of him unless the secret police remembered that he still existed.

For some time he lay on the cot blinking like an owl as his mind shifted. He saw the light grow dimmer. He noticed that in a short time real darkness would come, hemming him in with walls of gloom.

Von Tuyl had come to Berlin from Saxony. He had lived on the little ten-acre patch which for years was the only world he knew. His ancestors had lived and died there, save when his father marched with the German armies to Paris in the Franco-Prussian grapple and died by the bullet of a French reservist. His mother wanted him to remain and console her in her old age, but he would have none of it. He wanted to see the world; he wanted to look upon Berlin, to be somebody in the great world beyond little Saxony, for he had his ambitions like other people and so he had packed his few belongings and traveled to the capital. He was not an idler and by and by he got employment at the war office as coachman and was promoted to be driver of the War Minister's carriage, a position which placed him upon the pinnacle of glory.

But now the dream had passed. The flood tide of fortune had receded and he saw the bare sands of disappointment. And all because of that strange tragedy which had taken a life and caused the loss of a document which might set Europe on fire.

Poor little Von Tuyl was nothing now but a waif on the human sea, a thing to be buffeted about the world, with no home to go to, for the ten acres had been sold and the old mother was dead and in the country graveyard.

"They think I've got it," he suddenly exclaimed, rousing himself for a moment. "They have had me on the rack of torture, and though the War Minister has declared that I know nothing, people look askance at me as though I carry the great compact on my person."

He had said this a thousand times and now he was saying it again. At last he got up and went to the window. Resting his arm on the sill, he looked out and saw the myriad lights of the capital. He observed the beautiful globes along the Unter den Linden which was the scene of his triumphs when he drove his exalted master and saw the thousands bowing to the great man.

The recollection stirred Von Tuyl's blood.

"I'm going out if they do track me!" cried he. "I am not going to die here like a rat in a trap. I can come back later on and pull myself together. I've got to go, I know that, but where?"

He pulled his collar around his face, crunched his hat over his brows and set out. There was no spot in Berlin that was unknown to him. He knew the boulevards, the dens and the parks. He knew where the thief lived and where Croesus dwelt. He had never had but one love and he had almost forgotten her, for they had quarreled because Gretchen had taken up with a soldier and he had slapped her face for her unfaithfulness.

Von Tuyl proceeded down the street and turned into a narrower way. All at once he heard the sound of merriment and the next moment he was opposite a den from which the music proceeded. Pulling himself together he entered and modestly sought a secluded corner where he was not likely to be observed. It was a tinsel place and the music was as poor as the wine. But this made no difference to Von Tuyl. The poor devil wanted companionship and was willing to lick any bone to get it. His white wine served, he went at it like a man famished for a moistened tongue. It went through his blood like a rivulet of fire for he had ordered the hotest sort of vintage which the place afforded.

All at once the glass nearly dropped from his hand. A man was eying him from across the room. He had seen this man before and knew that he was known at the war office as Streuve, the companion of Strouse, the Austrian spy. To find that man looking at him seemed to sever the last strand of hope that bound Von Tuyl with the world. He must not linger there and yet he must escape this man. The music was nothing to the coachman; the singing of the tinseled chorus was a mere whine, and he tried to get his nerve back for a venture. At length he rose and sneaked out of the place. He would return home by some untraveled way. He must get away from Streuve. Like a startled hare he ran on and on, dodging into this dark alley and that, always keeping out of the light, looking over his shoulder, like a fugitive who expects at any minute to feel the hand of arrest at his collar. Panting at last Von Tuyl fell into his uncomfortable chambers.

When he caught his breath he turned and bolted the door. It was the last remnant of his strength. Thank heaven he was safe at last! He fell across the cot and shut his eyes. But somehow or other the face of Streuve came out of the darkness and the eyes were staring at him like a wolf's. How long he shivered in this condition he did not know. He was aroused by a light tapping on his door. Up he sprang and ran to a bureau from a drawer of which he took a revolver which his long fingers clutched with the biting energy of despair. A moonbeam stole in at the window and revealed the interior of his retreat. A minute later he was listening at the door with the thing in his hand. The light tapping was repeated. Von Tuyl found his tongue and asked:

"Who is there?"

"A person who wishes to see Wilhelm Von Tuyl."

It was unmistakably a woman's voice.

"What, a woman?" gasped the coachman. "In the name of heaven what does a woman want with me when I have done forever with the sex?"

However he laid his hand on the bolt and drew it back. Then he opened the door a trifle, keeping the revolver on a level with his face.

Sure enough he was confronted by a woman. He saw a hood and a pair of eyes, but that was all. Instinctively Von Tuyl pulled the door a little wider and his visitor glided forward. She had a carriage that seemed to fascinate him. When she got into the moonlight she threw back her hood and the coachman recoiled with a cry.

It was Isobel, the fair Alsatian!

"Do I frighten you?" she asked, seeming to enjoy his trepidation. "Pardon me, if I have brought fear with me."

He did not speak till he had rebolted the door, when he turned upon his visitor.

"I—I was not looking for you, mademoiselle," said he, his voice still in a tremor. "You do me great honor to pass my threshold. You are the great star ——"

"I am Mademoiselle Isobel," was the interruption. "I have called for a little chat."

What could Von Tuyl say? A thousand thoughts fought for precedence in his whirring brain. He pointed dumbly to the only chair the room contained while he leaned against the table and stared at the opera star.

"I won't trouble you long," resumed Isobel, fixing her gaze upon him. "You are not in the War Minister's employ any longer?"

"I? No, not at present, mademoiselle."

"But you were employed the night of the little affair of the official carriage?"

Von Tuyl shrugged.

"It was unfortunate since it lost me a good position," said he. "I could not help it, mademoiselle."

"No? You have told the police what you saw that night, but you did not go far enough. Of course you have your secrets, Herr Whelhelm, and I am here for one of them at least."

"But I have told all. I have said all that I know," insisted the coachman.

Isobel, still regarding him, rose to her feet and caught his arm as he drew back.

"I want the truth," said she. "I am here for what you really conceal. You know who killed Von Roon."

At that moment there were footsteps on the staircase and then the knob was turned.

"Did you hear than?" cried Von Tuyl. "He is out there, the devil-eyed man who saw me in the dance hall—Streuve!"

Isobel dropped his arm and coolly took from her pocket the silver mounted automatic.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WARNING.

ISOBEL looked at the trembling coachman but did not relax her grip on the automatic. Who had Streuve tracked—Von Tuyl or herself? She remembered what Strouse had said, that Streuve intended to denounce her, and she knew that if he did it might baffle all her plans to capture the imperial compact. For a moment she gazed at Von Tuyl, half pitying his fear, but all at once she laid her hand on the bolt.

"Don't!" cried Von Tuyl, seizing her arm. "Don't let that Austrian wolf in here. It will be the death of both of us."

Isobel did not heed. Some time or other she must have it out with Streuve, and that time might as well be now.

The iron bolt shot back with a click and Isobel opened the door. Von Tuyl recoiled with a cry. On the threshold stood Streuve, sure enough. The venomous gleam in his eyes told that he had come for no good, but the appearance of the fair Alsatian set him back. He had expected to find no one in the room but the coachman.

"Will you not come in?" asked Isobel in firm tones. "I have just been paying Herr Wilhelm a visit."

Streuve stammered.

"Pardon me, mademoiselle," said he when he got full control of his tongue. "I did not know Wilhelm had a caller."

The star of the opera was still holding the door open. Her manner totally nonpulsed the Austrian.

"I will not disturb your tete-a-tete," said he, drawing back, but not without a parting look at the trembling Von Tuyl. "I humbly ask your pardon for breaking in upon your pleasure."

A low bow and he was gone.

"Mademoiselle, I owe you my life!" cried the coachman, springing forward. "You have certainly saved it tonight."

"He wanted to see you, then?"

"Yes. Did I not see him watching me in the dance hall? He has eyes that talk."

She had closed the door and was facing the white-faced man.

"Why does Streuve want to see you?" she asked.

"Is he not acting for the Berlin police?"

"But if you know nothing, if you saw nothing the night Von Roon was killed, why does that man want to see you?"

There was no reply.

"Look here, Herr Wilhelm," continued Isobel, "if I have saved your life you owe me a return favor."

"That is true, mademoiselle."

"Then tell me all about that night."

The man was shivering again like one in the shadow of a great fear.

"You drove Von Roon to his death?"

"I drove the carriage, yes, mademoiselle."

"And when you opened the door for Von Roon in front of the imperial palace you found him dead?"

"He was quite dead."

"And he was alive when he set out on his journey?"

"Quite alive, mademoiselle."

"You heard nothing?"

"Nothing, as I live!"

"But what did you see?"

Her eyes seemed to search the very core of Von Tuyl's heart.

"Did you see anything?" she demanded, laying her hand on his arm.

"My duty was to drive Von Roon to the imperial palace," he stammered.

"Yes. I know that. You performed that duty. Who saw Von Roon get into the carriage in front of the war office?"

"Strouse."

Isobel did not start.

"No one else, Herr Wilhelm?" said she.

"No one else, mademoiselle."

"That is all, responded the Alsatian.

Von Tuyl let out a long breath.

"I am going now," she went on a moment later. "I thank you, Herr Wilhelm."

"But wait. You don't think Strouse did the deed?" exclaimed the coachman.

"I don't say who did it," was the reply. "Don't you know that the police are at fault?"

"They don't seem to be on the right track," said Von Tuyl. "It is a great mystery." And he shut up like a clam.

Isobel bade him good night and went down the stairs, half expecting to see the face of Streuve among the shadows of the street below.

She was agreeably disappointed for the expected was not there, and going to a limousine which had waited for her around the nearest corner, she was whisked away. It did not take her long

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My New Year's Eve.

The light grew dim in my room within,
And the stars were mildly beaming;
The raw wind sighed as the old year died,
And my heart was sad and dreaming.

My thoughts flew fast o'er the darkened past
Which mem'ry had long since hidden;
And bitter tears for the wasted years
Welled up from their depths unbidden.

"Ah! vain to fret, and in deep regret
To weep o'er the dead hopes lying;
Let New Year tell thou hast acted well,
For thy life is young—not dying."

Thus spoke my soul, and the far-off goal
All glowed with a light supernal;
In accents clear came a whisper near:
"God loves with a love eternal!"

The light grew dim in my room within,
While the stars were faintly gleaming;
The raw wind sighed and the old year died,
But my heart with hope was beaming!

—M. J. POWER.

to reach her chambers. Marka, the maid, was waiting for her and the moment the girl saw her mistress she let out a little cry.

"What has happened?" inquired Isobel. "You have had a visitor, Marka?"

"Yes, mademoiselle. Some one has called."

"Where is his card?"

"He left no card. All he gave me was this," and the girl took a bit of paper from her pocket and handed it to the wandering woman.

Isobel opened the missive and the moment she saw the lines her white teeth came together.

"It is not much," she said, turning to the breathless maid with a smile of assurance. "He might not have left this at all."

But when Marka had slipped out of the room Isobel read the letter again nor looked up till every word had been graven on her brain.

"Mademoiselle Isobel!" she read. "It is my painful duty to advise you to quit Berlin upon receipt of this. I am your friend; your wonderful powers have made me so and there are times when I put duty aside for humanity's sake. Your exit shall not be disturbed if, within the next twenty-four hours, you are on the road from Berlin. With assurances of friendship, I am,

"Your friend:
"DESHLER."

She looked up and smiled. She knew that Deshler was the chief of the secret police, a man of blood and iron and devoted to his duty.

When she had more than mastered every word of the warning she crumpled the message in her hand and then applied a match to it, watching it vanish in the ruddy flame. Had Streuve shot his bolt? Was this the Austrian's work and was she to fall in her sworn work? Twenty-four hours! There was much to do. She must work with lightning rapidity if she would baffle the two emperors and find the document which meant the peace or the war of Europe.

She looked out over Berlin and saw the lights which still illuminated the avenues. She caught sight of the glow about the vast imperial palace and wondered what the emperor was doing at that hour. A clock on her mantel ticked the seconds and told her that the morning was not far away. How she longed to get even with this man Streuve. Was he to upset all her plans and baffle her when she believed the end of the game was almost in sight?

She did not know where Lassiter had taken up his new quarters. He had left her in a pout, though he had kissed her, and she felt the dew of that last kiss upon her lips. With such feelings Isobel prepared for rest. In a few moments the dim light of the room fell upon her silent form and her breathings told that she had passed the gates of dreamland where one forgets the perplexities of life and lives, as it were, in the flowery fields of happinness.

The dawn came, spreading over Berlin already awake. It revealed the wonderful city of the Hohenzollerns, and there was peace everywhere save in her own beating heart. Already, hours of the twenty-four had passed away. She knew that Deshler would not extend the time. He had set the limit and after that the blow would fall.

And the mystery was not yet solved.

Far away in his summer palace, Czar Nicholas was waiting for her report. He had suspected that Germany and Austria were playing a game which might at any time set Europe on fire, but he wanted proof. And he had sent her to Berlin, she who had served him before, to gather up the evidence and thus arm him for the emergency. Isobel thought of all this while Marka dressed her. She dissembled so well that the maid thought she had had a happy adventure.

"I am going out," said the Alsatian when the toilet was complete. "I may not be back for some hours."

The limousine was at the door when she tripped down the staircase and, with the lightness of a bird, entered the machine. Neither Strouse nor Streuve was in sight and the motor sped swiftly through the city. When the car stopped she sprang out and entered the shop of Semkin, the perfumer, by the back way. The Russian nearly lost his balance when he saw her.

"Just a word, Semkin!" cried Isobel before he could frame a query. "I have come to say good-by. I am going to St. Petersburg tomorrow night."

"Then, you have ——"

"I haven't found it," was the interruption. "But tomorrow night I quit Berlin."

CHAPTER XV.

LITTLE STROUSE'S COUP.

LASSITER'S brain was on fire when he went from Isobel after her confession that she had listened to little Strouse's wooing. Her words only deepened his love for her, but the very thought that Strouse should regard her with the feelings he had expressed in burning language, nettled him to the core, and his mind was set on meeting the Austrian. Where to find him he did not know. At the same time, however, he realized that he himself was in deep and dangerous water for he had already felt the hand of the cabal. The recollection of the man with the bomb had not left him for a moment. When Strouse learned of the failure of the attempt on Lassiter's life, he would resort to other means to clear his way to Isobel, and there was nothing too desperate for this secret agent of Austria.

Lassiter's vengeance increased as the moments waned. Strouse had his haunts, as he well knew, and he was to some extent familiar with some of them. Not long after parting with the fair Alsatian Lassiter turned up in a certain quarter of Berlin like a hound on the trail. A motor car dashed by and he started when he saw on the back seat the very man he sought. A hurried bound took him to an empty taxicab, and, leaping into it, he ordered the man on the box to keep the limousine in sight. He was on the trail in a flash. If he could have guessed the train of thoughts that filled the mind of the woman he loved he might have hesitated.

Strouse's limousine turned into a certain street and the taxicab was still in pursuit. The quarry stopped at last.

"It has stopped," said Lassiter's man. "It is before the Hotel Spree."

"Ah, I thought as much. So that is his nest."

Confident that he had run his prey down, Isobel's lover alighted and looked at the little hostelry, which was half wrapped in shadow in the middle of an ancient block.

"Shall I wait for you?" asked the taxi driver.

"Yes, but around that corner," and with this Lassiter approached the hotel and soon reached the door.

To beard the lion in his den was his intention. To meet Herr Strouse at home was the paramount thought that possessed him. But what if Strouse was not alone? What if he was with the others of the cabal, Streuve and Darok? Lassiter did not think of such things. He entered the little foyer of the hostelry and proceeded to the desk.

"My friend who has just entered?" he said. "My friend, Strouse?"

"There is no such person here," was the reply.

"But ——" And then Lassiter imagined that the Austrian was sailing under other colors because of his secret calling.

"My friend has just come in," he said at a venture. "The little man, you know?"

"On, Herr Linenburg?"

"Yes."

"Second door to the right, at the head of the flight," and in another second Lassiter was on his way up.

As he reached the upper floor he felt the automatic in his pocket and smiled grimly. To find the designated door was no trick at alll. A light was seen over the transom and he went forward.

What was little Strouse doing? Had he already thrown off his garments for the night and would be able to take the lion unawares? He had resolved not to knock but to burst in upon his enemy and have it out with him before he could lift a finger. It was a desperate plan, but sometimes such plans are the best.

Lassiter laid his hand on the knob and gave it a sudden turn. He was in the room, dimly lighted by a lamp which stood on a small table in the middle of the floor. And little Strouse was there, too.

"Ha!"

The exclamation was the Englishman's. It was the first intimation that Strouse had of his escape from the infernal machine, but the little Austrian did not start. Strouse was a whole bundle of coolness.

"You?" said he, and there was a cold glitter in his eyes. "Take a seat monsieur."

Lassiter advanced to the table, all the time looking his adversary in the eye. To get off his guard he knew meant destruction.

"You do me great honor to call," resumed the Austrian. "I was not looking for you."

His sang-froid was gall to Lassiter.

"Maybe," said he, "you'd like to know how I escaped from the Warsaw express?"

"It is nothing to me," answered Strouse.

"Or perhaps you may want me to inform you what became of your infernal machine."

The Austrian executed a gesture of annoyance.

"You need not open that chapter," was the reply. "It would be dull reading to me at least."

Lassiter said to himself: "What sort of man is this? He is the coolest mortal I ever saw."

"Then to the import of my call," he went on, biting his lip under Strouse's immobility. "I have come to say that Mademoiselle Isobel is not to be pestered with your attentions."

A broadening smile came into being on the Austrian's countenance.

"The lovely Alsatian, you mean, the divinest creature who inhabits this sphere!"

"Yes, my friend Isobel. You have dared to make love to her."

She has told you then, monsieur?"

"Never mind from whom the information came," grated Lassiter with heated blood. "It is enough to know that you have made love to her, you reptile!"

"A compliment, not doubt, whether deserved or not," grinned Strouse.

Lassiter, in his fury, leaned across the table and looked into his rival's face.

His fingers clutched the cold, grey thing in his pocket.

"I will not permit it!" he hissed, all his blood seeming to boil in his veins. "Mademoiselle Isobel must not be annoyed by your kind."

Strouse leaned back in his chair.

"Now, this is getting interesting, monsieur," he ejaculated. "I did not expect to be so entertained. You have my thanks."

"Come to the real subject," cried Lassiter. "You will keep away from mademoiselle."

Then for the first time Strouse changed color. There was a lightning flash in his eyes.

"Do you know where you stand, monsieur?" he asked with all the coolness of a practised desperado.

"On equal ground with you," was the reply. "What are you going to do?"

"Pursue my own way as though you had never entered my life," was the retort.

"Reptile!"

Couldn't he irritate this man? Was there no way to bring about the collision which he feverishly sought?

"My dear sir," suddenly said Strouse and he smiled blandly as he spoke. "You will leave this room in one minute or be carried out."

It was to Lassiter the boast of one who was not able to carry out a single threat. He had Strouse at his mercy and he had but to leave his chair to have a bullet in his head.

Something suddenly moved at Lassiter's feet. He started back with the automatic half drawn, but there was a devilish pressure from below.

His feet had been caught in some sort of vise and he could not extricate them.

"You see," said Strouse," one must be prepared for all sorts of visitors. A man of my profession, and you know what that profession is, must be a person of expedients. What was it you were saying monsieur? Oh, yes. I am not to make love to the divine Isobel. Was that not it?"

What could Lassiter say?

"She is divinely beautiful," continued Strouse, abating none of his sang-froid. "I have a lovely estate in Austria which will delight a person of mademoiselle's attainments and—But why describe it, my dear Lassiter?"

Burke's fiery impulse was to whip out the automatic and make use of it.

"I can kill this beast," thought he," but then I would still be a prisoner for the police."

Strouse rose slowly to his feet. There was a glow in his little eyes that sent a chill through Lassiter's frame.

"I shall be back presently," Strouse continued, moving toward the door. "My little device will hold you, monsieur. And when I come back—Well, we will wait till that adorable moment. Then it will not be the Warsaw express nor the little ball that ticked."

Lassiter jerked the automatic from his pocket and as he turned upon the moving figure another just as potent looked him in the face.

"Don't," said little Strouse. "Your time hasn't come yet, monsieur."

And Lassiter was alone.

CHAPTER XVI.

CLEARING HIS WAY.

"SO," SAID the astonished Semkin to Mademoiselle Isobel when she had announced her intention of quitting Berlin, "so you are going to leave us?"

A little smile appeared at the corners of the Alsatian's mouth.

"Surely, good Semkin," she answered, "you do not expect me to remain here all the time?"

"But the document, mademoiselle?" persisted the pretended perfumer. "There is the paper that was taken from Von Roon when he was murdered in the War Minister's carriage?"

"I have not forgotten that," laughed Isobel. "You must not think that a thing like that would escape my memory."

The Russian spy looked at her but did not speak.

"If you are going away tomorrow night," he observed after a little spell, "will you not disappoint our friends, the Berliners? There is your engagement ——?"

"That is ended. I have nothing to do now but to depart."

She did not say anything concerning the warning she had received from the chief of the secret police who had given her twenty-four hours in which to shake the dust of the German capital from her feet. Though he knew Isobel was a spy for the Czar, Semkin had always regarded her as a mystery.

"I trust you will get away without mishap," said he, looking into her eyes. "But you know these Austrian spies."

"I know them all," answered Isobel. "I know Strouse, Streuve, Darok and all the rest."

"They are wary, mademoiselle," warned the Russian.

"But you forget that they can be met when is cunning enough for the game."

"And you are the very woman to outwit them!"

Isobel went away with a triumphant gleam in her dark eyes. Her first controlling thought was to find Lassiter. She had not forgotten their last meeting. There was something in the Englishman's farewell look that troubled her. He was jealous of Strouse. She had touched a weak spot when she told him of the Austrian's wooing in Count Buelow's gardens. Perhaps she had committed a blunder. She might have driven Lassiter from her side forever.

When she reached her rooms she sat down and went calmly over the whole situation. Streuve perhaps had denounced her to the police and the denunciation may have accounted for the warning from the chief of police. Her heart beat furiously as she thought of this man Streuve, who was capable of anything. If she could but find him! if she could face him ere she went away, she would let him know that a woman is one of the most dangerous things in the world. She had not gotten much out of Von Tuyl, but here visit to the cochman had not been altogether profitless.

The next day, Isobel's last in Berlin, dawned beautifully. Marka dressed her with more care than usual, and Isobel was patient to the end.

While this work was going on two men who had been together for some time, sat in the war office.

"I can well believe anything," said the War Minister as he looked into the face of Strouse.

"But I doubt this denouncement," was the reply. "Mademoiselle Isobel is an Alsatian."

"Yes, I grant that, but my informant came with strong proof ——"

"Streuve may have got hold of the wrong strand," insisted the Austrian. "He may be one of those human moths who have fluttered around the Alsatian's flame. You know that all Berlin has gone mad over her."

The War Minister bowed.

"I cannot withdraw my command," said he, looking up. "The woman must go."

There was nothing for Strouse to say.

"If some of your sleuth hounds would run to earth the person who killed Von Roon you would lift a load from my shoulders. I am tired of sweating that poor devil of a coachman. I am convinced that he knows nothing of the crime."

"Maybe not," replied Strouse." But the very thought that Streuve has denounced Mademoiselle Isobel as a spy does not mend matters so long as a great insult has been committed."

With this Strouse bowed himself out of the War Minister's presence. To find and reckon with Streuve was now his sole thought. He knew where to find his rival and he hastened to his rooms with rancor in his heart. Streuve must have scented danger from the look in his fellow spy's flashing orbs.

"So you've struck?" was Strouse's greeting as he looked down into Streuve's face. "So you've carried out your threat and denounced Mademoiselle Isobel?"

Streuve pulled himself together. They were alone in a little room which looked out over the winding Spree.

"I told you that I would unmask this Alsatian witch," growled Streuve. "She is the Czar's spy ——"

"Granted," broke in Strouse."

"She came here not to sing, but to play a game for her imperial master."

"You are sure of this?"

"As sure as you are and that is much."

Little Strouse shrugged his shoulders.

"Streuve," said he in cold, hard tones, "you are going to get out of the game."

"How?"

"By the route I choose for you."

There was a movement on Streuve's part, but he was not quick enough for Strouse. As he moved in his seat a revolver suddenly looked into his face and behind it he saw the serpent eyes of his fellow Austrian.

"Let me tell you something first," continued Strouse. "While you have played against Mademoiselle Isobel you have also played against me. The lovely Alsatian is to become my wife."

A look of wonder grew in Streuve's eyes.

"I don't believe it," said he. "She is fast with the Englishman Lassiter."

"For whom she really cares little," was the retort.

"But you of all men," laughed Streuve. "Do you think that Mademoiselle Isobel would become the wife of Strouse whom she regards as nothing but an Austrian spy?"

"I know what I know," answered Strouse with a wince, for the words cut him to the quick. "I have seen her. You do not know what took place at Count Buelow's ball."

"I saw you with her in the garden. I ——"

"Spying upon me, were you?" interrupted Strouse.

"I am faithful to my royal master."

All this time the revolver was looking doomfully into Streuve's face. It had not swerved a hair since it leaped from little Strouse's pocket.

"Where do you want it?" coolly asked Strouse over the automatic. "I don't like to spoil your face. I ——"

At that instant there came a thunderbolt that seemed to descend from a stormless sky. Streuve darted from his chair, sending out a swift arm which

(Continued on page fifteen.)

JERRY B.'S PARTNER

BY ARTHUR W. PEACH

I WAS fagged out and tired in a way that makes a man want to crawl off in a quiet corner and get away from everything except sleep and good food. I found the place in a little New England village, where you can get up-to-date luxuries in time and still imagine you are living in Sleep Hollow days. I located in a small house that fairly was smothered in roses. Three people were there, Mrs. Whitly, her daughter, a bright-haired little witch, and old Jerry B.

"Jerry B. was a character. Mrs. Whitly was one of the kind of women who make you think of clean, starched clothes, and home; she was like many a New England woman, but Jerry was like no other man I ever saw. He was called 'Jerry B.' by every one. His full name was Jerry Binford Browne.

"Soon I was on the best of terms with him; and many was the yarn he spun for me there in those quiet evenings of the summer. I learned the old fellow's history and circumstances, and they were interesting to me. And, too, I learned of his partner.

"Jerry B. was a cripple and his days were numbered, but the thought never took the cheerfulness out of his voice. In the shriveled body was a man's big, superb soul. He came or rather was brought to Mrs. Whitly, his sister, from the West, and she had taken up the burden of caring for him. I knew, as Jerry would say, 'the goin's rough,' and I saw to it that my board was raised. It was the one point that grieved him—the thought that he was useless in helping meet the expenses of the little family; and one day he told me the story of his great hope, of what was going to come, of the day when he could repay Mrs. Whitly for the years she had been good to him.

"It seemed that once he had been a prospector in the West, hunting through the Black Hills, and, after long years of searching, he located a mine that promised big—at least, he saw gold outcroppings everywhere about him. In his excitement at the time, he slipped down among the jagged rocks at the bottom of the gulch, and broke his leg—a compound break. Right there he commenced a grim fight for life. He was picked up by a party as he was digging himself, mile after mile, toward the distant settlement, and carried in. There he fought for life, and won, and planned again the hunt for the gold he had seen. But the leg healed badly, his vitality was exhausted, and he knew he would never again range the hills. When he realized it, he sent for his old friend and partner, MacBurley, who was in the North. He came, and Jerry gave him a map of the place where the gold lay. Jerry had then come East to his sister's, realizing that the game was over.

"He came to the little village, and began to wait for word from Mack; and when I appeared, he had been waiting twenty-five years—and had not lost faith in his partner! He would hobble out on his crutches to the small porch that faced the long, winding road that wound up from the valley, and there he would wait for Mack, who never came.

"When Mack came, what wonderful things he would do with the money from the mine! He would reward Mrs. Whitly, and the youngster would have something to remember her old uncle by. So he planned.

"Twenty-five years is a long time to wait, as the years of a man's life run, and faith has to be pretty strong to believe that a man, finding a mine under the circumstances that Mack did, would return to give it up. If Jerry B. doubted no one knew it, and I think he never did. Everyday he watched for the figure of Mack, inside the house or on the porch.

"I asked Mrs. Whitly one day about it, and she smiled in a queer way. 'I didn't know he had been talking with you about it,' she said. 'Of course Mack will never come, for I wrote West when Jerry B. first came, to find out, and they wrote back that Jerry B. must have lost track of direction in leaving if he did find the gold place, for Mack had never appeared to file a claim. You see they found Jerry B. in delirium, and it may all be a dream that has become real:

"I was touched by the story, as you can imagine. Something in the old man's hope, his supreme faith in his partner, his years of disappointment, appealed to me. I knew he suffered, hourly, daily, yet never complained. If I had been of the praying kind, I think I should have prayed for his dream—that itmight come true. I saw a good surgeon, and had him drop in on Jerry B. as my visitor, and look Jerry over. But the old man merely smiled when the doctor examined him.

"'Ye can't patch up this ole boat, doc,' he said. 'I'm gettin' ready to ancher where it's quiet.'

"Well, there was nothing that could be done for him in a medical way, and Myers said Jerry would go before the snow flew. The old man seemed to know it, and I know he was deeply grieved by the thought that he wouldn't be here, perhaps, when Mack came. The thought, after the doctor's visit, seemed to haunt him more and more, and his longing grew, as did the hours he spent watching the road.

"One day I was reading down in the orchard, when I heard a queer, strangled shout. I looked up, and saw Jerry B. stagger off the porch, stumble a little way down the path, and fell in a heap. I ran up, fear in my heart that he had gone on the road that we never tread back, but as I got up to the path, I saw him rise and point down the road. He gasped as he pointed, and his voice shook with the delirium of joy.

"'Mack's comin'" were his words.

"I looked down the road and saw a bent figure coming along. It looked like an old man, walking with a staff. I helped Jerry to his feet, but he refused to go back to his chair. He was going to be ready to welcome his partner. I was fearful that it might be some farmer on his way to the village, but as he came near, Jerry swung his arms excitedly and the man answered. I had hard work to hold Jerry then.

"'Sure it's him! Look at the limp in his gait—ain't I seen him walk many the mile with that?'" he cried to me.

"A little nearer, he shook me and said, 'Look! See! he's chewin.' He was an awful chewer, Mack was—liked his plug more'n his glass!'

"The old man came up, hobbling along on his game leg, and he and Jerry fell into each other's arms. Mack had come back.

"There isn't much more to tell. They had changed with the years, and memories were weak in spots, but they talked over the old days; and it was a difficult job to get them to bed that night. Mack said he had found the mine, but had stumbled just about where Jerry did, struck his head and had been injured. The man he had brought with him, got him out of the hills, and to a doctor, but the injury had been to the brain, and nothing could be done for him. Mack was taken to a hospital on the coast. Memory, which had been a blank, had returned slowly and he had recalled his partner, Jerry. The mine proved to be a surface affair, but he brought five thousand dollars which had been left after his own expenses had been paid.

"There was more to the story. It was told and retold by the old man. Jerry B. was happy. He had known Mack would come back, though no one had believed it but himself.

"Mack hung around for a week, and then he had to leave. Jerry watched him out of sight. I went out after a while to see Jerry. He was sitting in the old chair, his cane between his legs, the roses blowing about him. He sat so quietly that I was startled and stepped forward with a quick word—death comes so easily to the old, sometimes, almost as softly as the petals were drifting about Jerry. He looked up slowly, and I knew he was smiling.

"'Oh, I'm all right, lad,' he said to me. 'I've been thinkin'. I know what Heaven is like, where old friends, old lovers, mothers and children meet after they've been parted.'"

The young fellow got up as he finished his story. His fine, clear-cut face was tender. "I swear I don't know why I told you gentlemen this story. Perhaps I have told you something that will show you, contrary to what the man who was talking before me tried to, that there is in this world, in unexpected places, the great faith of man for man, of man in man."

He went away rapidly, as if anxious to get away from the scene of the place where he had spoken of intimate themes.

"Who is he?" asked one of the hearers.

"No one knows, I guess. But say, he mentioned Myers. Just for the fun of it, send for the doctor. He's down in the smoking-room," suggested another.

A page brought the doctor, who greeted them. One of the men explained the situation: they had been chatting on the subject of man's belief in another, and the views expressed had been rather cynical. The young fellow had asked permission to recount an experience of his own. Securing ready permission, he had done so. Then, the story was outlined.

The doctor fingered his watch chain with uneasy fingers.

"He's Ralph Martin, son of Martin, the big iron man, you know," Myers said. "He's been in the West for the last several years, and I brought him here tonight to try and interest him in our place. He's ——"

"Yes, doc, but how about that story, is it true?" Keenan asked, a lawyer famed for his cross-examinations. "It had spots ——"

Myers looked ill at ease again. "Frankly, I don't want to say much about this matter, but what Martin said is true. There was a man with that faith ——"

"Yes, but what about the other's coming back?" Keenan asked.

Myers leaned over, his face sober. "Look here, I'll tell you the truth, gentlemen, but I swear you to silence. Martin came to me and outlined a scheme. I told him that Jerry wouldn't live long enough to make any complications occur, and I advised him to go ahead.

"He hired Macery, the old character actor who had retired to impersonate, Mack. Martin, having heard the necessary facts and stories from Jerry, had the material with which to prime Macery to perfection, and the old impersonator said to me that he did the finest piece of work he had ever done.

"Martin furnished the money, and Mrs. Whitly, who certainly needed it, got it. She was a simple-minded woman and, after the first disbelief, the sight of the money and Mack convinced her.

"Martin is sensitive about the affair, and feels that he did wrong. But my examination showed me that the old man had been suffering terribly for most of the twenty-five years, and Jerry poured into this cup of dregs, the water of perfect joy. Jerry lived only a week after Mack's coming. He was satisfied, and let go. But that week was happiness for him—wonderful happiness. I don't believe the boy's name is very black on the Big Book.

"He's got a tender heart, or he would not have done what he did—or spoken to you; but, probably, he proved his point.

"Remember, gentlemen—silence all!"

* * *

The Death Ring

(Continued from page five.)

volunteers saw that car of dynamite explode, but two minutes after it rolled out of sight through the pass there was a deafening roar that told it had done its work.

All that day the battle raged in the pass. At noon the enemy's gunners found the exact range of the Altrurian fortress and in another hour it was reduced to a scrap heap. The scene about the ruins of that fortress were too horrible to relate. But before the howitzers had found the fort the shrapnel had found that potato field full of soldiers and the little field was soon untenable. The village was likewise shot to pieces and several buildings set on fire.

At half past two in the afternoon scouts reported that the enemy were preparing for a general assault, and the Altrurians massed themselves in solid formation to receive them. A half dozen mountain batteries, consisting of Gatlings and other rapid-fire machine guns, were placed so as to command the narrowest part of the pass. The preparation for slaughter was ominous, awesome.

At fifteen minutes past three the enemy began to deliver their assault. They swarmed through the pass like ants. First cavalry, a magnificent battalion of sabrereurs, and then the infantry in close formation. The fire from the machine guns mowed them down like wheat before the reaper, the Altrurian infantry poured in a deadly, plunging fire, but still they came on. The front ranks were annihilated and the second ranks leaped forward over their criss-crossed bodies. The second ranks were tumbled higgledy-piggledy in horrible, squirming heaps, and the third ranks dashed forward over these slippery mounds to meet their death in turn.

The battle turned into a confused melee. In fifteen minutes the reserves, who had scrambled over the third rank men, were bayoneting the gun crews of the mountain batteries. They spread out fanwise on the inner lines of the crescent the Altrurian infantry had formed. Then Prince Rupert Victor ordered a countercharge along the whole front, and the battlefield was turned into a shambles. No one could have told who was losing or who was winning. Whole commands were annihilated. Soldiers were killed and remained standing, so thick were the dead around them. Then the enemy brought forward their mountain batteries, and it looked as if the Altrurian army would be wiped out in their tracks. Prince Rupert saw the situation and ordered a retreat behind the second line of defenses. The retreat threatened at any moment to become a headlong route. The young Prince turned to Harry. The tears were streaming down his face.

"My God!" he cried. "Oh, my God! This is the first time Altruria has been invaded in four hundred years! It will kill my mother!"

He wheeled his horse and dashed along the retreating columns, shouting lustily to his subordinates in a voice of enforced cheerfulness. It was this action that saved that retreat and stopped it inside the lines of the second defenses. But the "Serpent of War" had at last wriggled its head through the northern pass. It was now only a matter of hours till its whole body would come through.

This thrilling story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

Good Rezolushuns

That I won't smoke enny more cigars, only at sumbody else's expense.

That I won't borry nor lend—espeshily lend.

That I will liv within mi inkum, if I hav tew git trusted tew do it.

That I will be polite tew evrybody, except muskeeters and bedbugs.

That I won't advise ennybody, until I kno the kind ov advice they are anxious tew follow.

That I won't wear enny more tite boots, if I hav tew go barefoot tew do it.

That I won't eat enny more chicken soup with a one-tined fork.

That I won't swop dogs with no man, unless I kan swop two for one.

That I won't object tew enny man on ackount ov hiz color, unless he happens tew be blue.

That I won't sware enny, unless I am put under oath.

That I won't beleave in total depravity, only in gin at 4 shillings a gallon.

That poverty may be a blessing, but if it iz, it iz a blessing in disguise.

That I will take mi whisky hereafter straght—straight tew the gutter.

That the world owes me a living—provided I earn it.

That I will stick tew mi taylor az long as he will stick tew me.

That I won't swop enny horses with a deakon.

That no man shall beat me in politeness, not so long az politeness kontinues tew be az cheap az it iz now.

That I won't hav enny religious kreed miself, but will respekt evryboddy else's.

That if lovely woman smaks me on one cheek, I will turn the other to her also.

That if a man kalls me a phool, I won't ask him to prove it.

That I will lead a moral life, even if I lose a good deal ov phun by it.

That if a man tells me a mule won't kik, I will beleave what he sez without trieing it.

That if ennybody loozes even a goose, I will weep with him, for it iz a tuff bizness tew looze a goose.

That if I ever do git a hen that kan lay 2 eggs a day, I shall insist upon her keeping one ov the eggs on hand for a sinking phund.

That it iz no disgrace tew be bit bi a dog, unless he duz it the seckond time.

That it is just az natral tew be born ritch az poor, but it iz seldum so convenient.

That one of the risyest things tew straddle is the bak ov a 60-day note.

That the best time tew repent ov a blunder iz just before the blunder is made.

That I will try hard tew be honest, but it will be just mi darn luk tew miss it.

That I won't grow enny kats. Spontaneous kats hav killed the bissness.

That I will love my mother-in-law if it takes all the money I kan earn tew do it.

That I beleave really good lies are gitting skarser and skarser every day.

That I will respekt public opinyun just az long az I kan respekt myself in doing it.

That when I hear a man bragging on hiz ancestors, I won't envy him, but I will pity the ancestors.

That I won't beleave in enny ghost or ghostesses unless they weigh about 140 pounds and can eat a good square meal.

That I won't bet on anything, for things that require betting on lak sumthing.

That I will brag on mi wife all the time, but I will do it silently.

That I won't be surprised at ennything, not even tew be told that Ben Franklin waz a spendthrift, or that Lazarus died ritch.

That I will despize most things that I see, not out ov malice, but out of wisdum.

That I won't hanker for happiness; but if I see enny that I think iz a bargin, I will shut one eye and go for it.

That I won't wish I waz az pure as King David, but that I was purer than I am.

That I won't kovet enny man's possessions—neither hiz oxen, nor hiz kornstalks, nor the color ov his mustash.

That I will laff every good chance I kan git, whether it makes me gro phatt or not.

—Josh Billings in New York Weekly.

* * *

JANUARY FIRST.

The new year comes, the old year goes!
  Swept on by Time's insistent sands;
Bell tongues enhance, with lusty blows,
  Heartbeats of mirth—through ringers' hands.

Year builders live through work well done;
  True squared and plumb, with bedrock base;
Warm rainbow hues, sapped from the sun
  With lines that shame rare frost-work's grace.

Trace souls of craftsmen through their skill,
  In treasured manuscript and tome,
Live master minds, death could not still;
  Minds which reap fields that others roam.

Through all which makes the year for man
  May crowd years passed, with bursting store—
Stretched back to where crude hands began,
  Each new year holds that all—and more.

—EDWIN M. CASE.

* * *

Some marriages may be failures, but we have noticed that most widows and widowers are anxious to try again.

The Stool Pigeon

Or, Fox Slavin, Detective

By Julian F. Darrow

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CHAPTER XX.

SUTCLIFFE seemed to be pondering over what the other had just told him, probably drawing heavily on his cigar at the same time, for quite a volume of tobacco smoke floated out of the window close to which Old Fox Slavin was crouching, eagerly drinking in all this talk. He was not at all surprised, for even before now he had fully made up his mind as to just what the plot of Hollis Sutcliffe must be, as he had mentioned to old Throgmorton, Billie's father. A little more loitering there, and the detective would consider that he had heard all he wished. After that he must find some means of entering the building, since to pass down the ladders of the fire-escape might prove a risky venture—not that there was any chance of his slipping, but some alarmed tenant below was apt to take a crack at him as a possible burglar.

"I wish we knew whether Pillsbury carried out your orders, Annesley," he heard the bachelor of the elegant St. Cloud apartments say, presently.

"Suppose we try to get him on the wire then?" suggested Annesley.

"A good notion, old man. If we fail to get a rise we can conclude that Pillsbury has skipped out, and will communicate with you in a few days from some distant place."

Upon which the detective heard Sutcliffe ring up, and ask to be connected with a certain number, which he had from Annesley. There was a period of waiting.

"Looks like he must have gone, eh?" suggested Annesley, hopefully.

"I'll ask and see," replied the other, and immediately adding through the transmitter: "Hello, Central! can't you get me that connection?"

"She says there seems to be no one at home. She's kept trying, but receives no answer," he said to Annesley, and rang off.

But the man who crouched there on the little platform of the fire-escape knew why there was no reply to the repeated efforts of Central to get Pillsbury. The latter party happened to be sojourning at that identical moment under the roof of the detective's domicile, so that when the plotters guessed that he was not at home, they were hitting pretty close to the truth.

"That leak is stopped, apparently," he heard Sutcliffe say, in a relieved tone.

"Yes; and I warned Henry not to let a living soul know where he was going; he could take a taxi up to the Grand Central Station, board a train out the first thing; and several days from now communicate cautiously with me; because I expect he'll be wanting another billet. Money slips through his fingers like water."

"Well, I'm willing to pay decently, if things go to my satisfaction. The stake is worth all it costs to me. Then if this cursed detective manages to find where Pillsbury has been hanging out, he'll get there a little too late to clap hands on the shaky link in the chain."

"I begin to feel that after all it was only the desire for company that bore heavy on me, and not a fear that things were all going to the bow-wows," Annesley remarked, in a satisfied tone. "I'll take one of those weeds after all, Hollis. The smell of yours has aroused my appetite for a smoke."

"To recapitulate, let's see how the land lies. Billie, you positively believe, is on the water by now, filled with a cowardly fear that every man is watching him. My respected uncle is groaning as he tries to sleep; for the finding of Billie's night key in the possession of the burglar he caught clumsily hiding in his library, has doubtless filled his parental soul with fresh anguish, and his resolution to cut the miserable boy off as his heir will have received new impetus. Possibly he may even be sending for me in the morning to announce that he has washed his hands of Billie forever."

"And if, as I told you I suspected," Annesley broke in, "Janet has gone to the trouble and expense to hire a detective to help save the weak boy, he's going to get left high and dry when he tries to find Pillsbury, so as to refute the rumor that Henry died after being struck by young Throgmorton with that billiard cue."

"That seems to leave a clean slate, always providing your hired thief played his part decently. He was to say he had picked up the key, wasn't he?"

"Yes, but to show signs of confusion at the same time. I posted him enough to let him understand that we were trying to fasten the job on a boy named Billie. If the old gent happened to mention that name he was to start, and look guilty, even while stoutly denying that he had ever known a Billie."

"Fine work, Annesley. It takes a fellow like you to lay a clever scheme; and I want to tell you again that it is a pleasure to work in company with a past master in the art of tripping people. Then, since you've come in touch with me tonight you no longer feel uneasy?"

"That's a fact, Hollis, I'm all right now, only awfully sleepy. Fact is I just can't see where there can be any hitch in our plans. Everything is working as smooth as silk. You're going to win both the girl and the old man's fortune as well. But I can't help feeling a little sorry for that silly sucker."

"You mean Billie? He has only himself to blame for all his troubles, Annesley."

"I reckon you're right. When a fellow has a rich dad, and a sweet girl like that Janet loves him devotedly, he is the greatest fool unhung when he deliberately allows himself to go the pace, and throws himself to the dogs. I've been a wanderer all my life and something of an adventurer, dependent for a living on my wits; but between you and me, Hollis, if ever I'd had the chance for happiness Billie had, you'd never catch me casting it aside."

Something like a sign accompanied the words, and the listening detective realized that this man might not be quite so black as he had painted him. But he believed that he had now heard all he wished, to answer his purposes. The next thing was to get away without being detected. He hoped that neither of the men would be seized with a sudden notion to thrust a head outside while he still occupied that platform of the fire-escape. Discovery would be apt to arouse suspicions in their minds; and while this might not change the outcome so far as the saving of Billie went, still it would alter the complexion of the detective's plans. Consequently he did not wish to make any sound that would be apt to alarm the two conspirators.

He turned, and tried the window leading into the little side hall. Of course it was fast. Somehow, Old Slavin had an idea that Maybrick, the superintendent of the building, might be hovering around just inside, perhaps in that very hall. If he could attract his attention all would be well; and in order to do so he stood up, so that his figure would be seen through the window.

It was perhaps a bold move, but the result proved the sagacity of the sleuth; for presently he realized that some one had drawn close to the inside of the sash. He made gestures with his hand that he wished to come in, and immediately the other started to unfasten the window. The detective slipped through as soon as the sash had been cautiously raised.

"That explains it, sir," whispered the other in his ear; "I was bothering my head to guess what had become of you. Then you went out of his window, and have been hiding on the fire-escape ever since?"

"Listening to as fine a little scheme as ever came to the ears of a hard-working detective," replied the sleuth, in the same careful tone.

"I'm glad you succeeded, sir, and without arousing any suspicions too. But then I ought to have known, if anybody could do it, you could. And now what, sir?" went on the superintendent.

"Nothing more from you, my friend. And make sure that I feel heavily indebted for what you've done already."

"Please don't mention it, sir. Don't I owe you a heavy load of gratitude that it would be hard to pay? And every day that I enjoy the pleasure of seeing that little woman, and our child, in my happy home, you can just bet I repeat the vow I took when I met her first. But since I saw you last I've mustered up enough courage to tell her all."

"You mean about your former life, and the trouble you ran up against?"

"Everything. She knows that I was once in prison, and if I hadn't met her, might be there again for life."

"Well, I advised you to do that after meeting her. And Maybrick, she didn't scorn you, did she?"

"I should say not, sir. She said she loved me more than ever because I had been through the fire and had managed to rise above my condition. And between us, sir, I rather think it pleased her a whole lot to know that the only thing that saved me was my love for her. She wouldn't let me loose now for all the gold on earth, she says. We understand each other, and we're happy."

"I'm glad of that, Maybrick. Shake hands again on it; and if I can ever do you a good turn, don't hesitate to call on me. It will give me more pleasure than it can possibly bring to you. Take me to the stairs. I'll walk down; and you return to your family. Good night, Maybrick."

When Old Fox Slavin walked out of the St. Cloud shortly afterward, he was humming softly to himself, after the manner of a man perfectly satisfied with the way fortune was treating him; for he had his plans all arranged so as to give Sutcliffe and Annesley the surprise of their lives on the following morning.

CHAPTER XXI.

AT TEN o'clock the following morning two gentlemen got out of a taxicab in front of the Throgmorton house. One of them was our old acquaintance, Annesley. The other seemed to be a rather handsome, sanctimonious looking young man, about thirty years of age, who had apparently seen something of the world. He paid the chauffeur as though the other were his guest.

"What do you suppose the old gent wants with you?" asked Annesley, as he glanced up at the fine stone building, and in his heart envied his companion his chance of coming in for it some day.

"There you've got me guessing. Uncle simply telephoned me to come up at ten, and to bring my friend Mr. Annesley along. I think he must have fancied you at that time I introduced you to him," replied the other, who, of course, was Hollis Sutcliffe.

"Well, that's nice of you to say that. It wouldn't go amiss if he fancied me enough to leave me a little slice of his millions," chuckled Annesley.

They were speedily ushered into the house.

"Mr. Throgmorton is in the library, gentlemen," said the butler, without attempting to show them the way; for surely the nephew of the master must be quite at home there.

Upon entering they made a discovery that somehow gave Annesley a sudden thrill of alarm; but there was not a sign of such on the face of his companion, for Sutcliffe had perfect control over his features.

"Janet!"

But the girl did not raise her head as Sutcliffe thus uttered her name. She was sitting across the room, and had her face hidden in her hands; apparently she had been sobbing, for even then her slight frame seemed to shake with the emotion she could not wholly control. Mr. Throgmorton looked grave. There was good reason for this, more so than even the wildest flight of fancy

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on the part of Hollis Sutcliffe could picture.

The gentleman motioned them to chairs. Considering that he must be very much upset by the puzzling news brought by Janet, neither of the young gentlemen thought anything of his neglect at shaking hands.

"She has come to show him that letter!" thought Annesley; and then he found considerable satisfaction in the conviction that by this time the frightened Billie must be far out upon the ocean, sailing under an alias that would prevent his identity being known.

Mr. Throgmorton picked up something from the table. Yes, it was undoubtedly a letter, and from its crumpled condition one that had evidently been read and reread many times.

"Please look at that, Hollis, and tell me what you think of it."

Sutcliffe understood what it must mean, and all the while he allowed his eyes to pass over the big, boyish writing he was acting his part. He did not see that Janet had raised her head just a very little bit, so that she could use her eyes, and watch him out of the corners of those blue orbs. Sutcliffe turned to Annesley.

"My friend here has been making a confession to me, uncle. I promised to keep the secret inviolate, thinking that it would be best for you. But now I hardly know what to do in the matter. It is a terrible condition of affairs. I want to shield poor Billie as far as possible, and yet it is only right that you should know the sad story as it was told me. Only I am pledged to mention no names."

"Then something dreadful has happened to that wretched boy—he has finally succeeded in disgracing himself, and this letter is not a hoax?" demanded Mr. Throgmorton, clinching his hands in apparent agony, and gritting his teeth as might a man who, only with a supreme effort, masters his weakness.

"I regret to say that something did come about, but it was more an accident than deliberate intention on his part, sir. I assure you those who were present all agree on that point."

"Proceed. Tell me the nature of his foolishness!"

"As I understand it, several of the fellows, among them Mr. Annesley here, were in a clubhouse where boxing and fencing are practiced. There had been bad blood between Billie and another party for some time. A sudden dispute sprang up, and before any one could think of interfering they were slugging each other."

"Contemptible! To think that a son of mine should so far forget his breeding as to indulge in such a low brawl. Go on. What happened next?"

"I understand that Billie was getting the worst of it when, by some accident, his hand came in contact with a heavy billiard cue!"

"Heavens!"

"Mr. Annesley says his head happened to be turned just at that second, so he did not see the blow struck. But when he looked he saw Pills—that is, the antagonist of Billie—on the floor, his head covered with blood, and Billie staring at him, still gripping the heavy cue by the tip end!"

"Oh!"

Hollis Sutcliffe just gave one glance toward Janet when she uttered this little cry.

"I regret very much, uncle, that you have forced me to make this statement while the young lady is present. I would never have told you only that, having learned this much from that letter, it was unfair to keep you in the dark," he went on, deliberately perjuring himself in the most brazen manner possible.

No wonder Janet had again concealed her face in her little kerchief; had he seen her eyes then, Hollis Sutcliffe would have read the most tragic scorn and loathing in their depths. And, singular to say, he did not notice the faintest sign of the fatal handwriting on the wall that told of his coming undoing.

"Do you know what followed, or how badly the injured party was hurt?" asked Mr. Throgmorton, who in this crisis proved that he could carry a part most excellently.

"Accounts have been very much muddled on that score, uncle. His friends hastened to smuggle him away, for fear lest they get mired up in the row. I have heard, since Annesley told me the facts, that some say he is recovering. But one man told me most positively that he was dead!"

Mr. Throgmorton lowered his head, as though seeking to gain control over his weakness. Presently he looked up again.

"What do you know about the miserable boy? Has he been arrested as yet?" he asked, huskily.

"No, and the chances are he will never be, even if the worst happens. Annesley tells me he assisted in getting Billie aboard a vessel sailing for Europe, and at this moment he is on the high seas, bound out. So make your mind easy, dear uncle. There will be no arrest; and in case the man does not die it can possibly be hushed up so that no one will be the wiser. I promise that I will do everything in my power to keep it out of the papers."

Perhaps Mr. Throgmorton should have eagerly gripped the hand of his noble nephew at that, and in trembling tones told how much he felt indebted to him for all this thoughtful affection. But he did not. Truth to tell, knowing what he did about Sutcliffe, the elder gentleman could not have been hired to allow his hand to come in contact again with the person of his nephew, unless in anger.

"You are very kind, Hollis, and I shall never forget it. Perhaps after all, light may come out of the darkness. He may have received a lesson that will last him the rest of his life. And if he has sailed, as your friend says, he must never come back to worry us again. I will cut him off and let him shift for himself."

"Oh! don't be too hard on poor Billie, uncle. He's only weak, you know, a failing inherited perhaps from his mother's side. Perhaps later on you may relent and make him an allowance over there. But I hope the wretched boy will never annoy any of you again."

Janet could stand no more. She sprang to her feet, and faced the sleek schemer with blazing eyes, so that the startled Sutcliffe fell back before her.

Oh! you contemptible hypocrite!" she cried, stamping one little foot on the carpet as though words failed her in that emergency.

Sutcliffe turned appealingly to his uncle.

"I put it to you, uncle, if I haven't always stood up for poor Billie on every occasion? If he could be here right now, he'd tell you I was his best friend!" he exclaimed.

"Then suppose we put it to the test," observed the ex-coffee king, grimly; "call him, Janet!"

"Billie!" shrieked the girl, excitedly, turning her head.

Then, to the utter consternation of the precious pair of plotters, a door opened, and Billie Throgmorton himself stepped into the room!

CHAPTER XXII.

BILLIE was supposed to enter with a very hangdog cast of countenance, as though he carried a heavy weight on his shoulders. He, however, was no actor, and proved quite unequal to the task set before him. He was grinning broadly as he appeared, and faced his cousin and Annesley. Of course a man so clever as Hollis Sutcliffe, realized on the spot that the game must be up. Billie there instead of away out on the broad ocean meant that some one must have leaked, and that the proud father knew all! He shot one glance toward Annesley. No need to question his faithfulness, for he was staring at Billie as though he could not believe his own eyes.

Sutcliffe was one of those cool customers, who, even in crushing defeat, can smile, and show a nerve that is almost colossal. He knew now that Janet had not been sobbing back of her hands and that web of a kerchief. She had been playing a part, and doing it with a skill of which any amateur actress might have boasted. And Mr. Throgmorton, too, had carried out his role of a heartbroken father to perfection, when all the while he must have been laughing in his sleeves at the way these detected schemers were tumbling into the pit they had themselves dug. He stood there now, looking first at Billie with an expression of sincere affection on his aristocratic countenance, and then toward the baffled plotters with evident scorn and contempt.

Perhaps Sutcliffe's complacency sprang from his belief that his uncle would decline to prosecute any one for this conspiracy against Billie. He was too proud of the family name to have it dragged in the dirt, and blazoned in big black headlines in all the morning papers. But Annesley did not have that assurance, and hence his knees felt wobbly, as the full extent of the calamity that had overtaken them burst upon him.

"Ahem! Now if you feel like asking Billie what he thinks of you, Hollis, you can avail yourself of the opportunity, for this is probably the last occasion when you will ever come under the Throgmorton roof!" observed the gentleman, his voice filled with satire.

But Sutcliffe knew when he was beaten, and did not care to make a show of himself, trying to catch his second wind.

"Oh! no, thanks, uncle, I can see that the little game I was playing for the favor of fortune has met with a rebuff. But all the same you have not the least evidence against me. I will deny everything, and simply go my way. The world is wide, and you will never be bothered with me again, I assure you."

His air was jaunty. Even in defeat he could dare to hold his head up, and snap his finger at the vagaries of fate.

But Mr. Throgmorton was not yet finished.

"Possibly you might always wonder how this miserable game of yours fell through. In order that you may understand the true inwardness, allow me to tell you that in her distress Janet appealed to an old friend of her father's and that, as he chanced to be a famous detective, Old Slavin by name, he easily found a way to discover the truth."

Through the same door that Billie had used stepped two men. One of them was a middle-aged gentleman whom Annesley instantly recognized as the one he had seen in the elevator at the time he left Billie with the thousand-dollar bait in his possession. The other kept his head lowered, but both men knew that it was Henry Pillsbury, who, caught in the net, had turned upon them. Even then Sutcliffe only laughed recklessly.

"So, the chain was weak in that link, after all, was it? Henry, let me congratulate you on being alive this day instead of a fit subject for the undertaker. And as for you, sir, I admit that, clever as I considered myself, after all I was only a tenderfoot in comparison with your talents. I take off my hat to you, and sincerely hope we may never chance to meet again."

Old Slavin had been studying the man ever snice he and Annesley had arrived.

"I have no doubt that wish is sincere, Mr. Sutcliffe, but unless you mend your ways the time is not far distant when you are bound to come in contact with me, or another of the same profession. For I give you my word you are drifting perilously near a cell at this very minute. Only for uncle's aversion to publicity I would take the greatest pleasure in the world in sending you up the river for a term of years. I consider you a dangerous man to be at large."

"Ah! thanks for the compliment. Uncle, if you will allow me, I shall now withdraw. Virtue is again triumphant, and the wretched schemer kicked out of the ancestral halls. Miss Janet——"

"Stop! don't you say a single word to her, or I'll forget that I've promised to curb this ugly temper of mine, and give you cause to remember poor Billie to the end of your days!"

Billie faced his cousin, fire flashing from his eyes; and evidently Hollis did not care to provoke him further, for he

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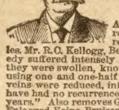

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shrugged his shoulders and turned away.

"Even a worm will turn, they say, Annesley," he remarked, as he walked out; "and as for you and me, we've a right to be thankful they allow us to get away with whole skins."

He shot one malevolent glance at the cringing Pillsbury, and then, preceded by the anxious Annesley, stalked proudly from the library

Janet was already in the arms of her lover. And Mr. Throgmorton, his patrician face wreathed in happy smiles, looked at the detective and winked.

"I promised this fellow five hundred dollars, sir," said the detective, "to assist him in getting out to San Francisco, where he has relatives. New York would possibly be unpleasant for him after this, since those fellows are not to be driven out of the city. Would you mind drawing him a check for that amount?"

Pillsbury took the money, and hastened to leave, nor did his old haunts in the metropolis ever know him again.

Old Slavin was compelled to explain to Billie, Janet and the ex-coffee king, many things that were still shrouded in mystery. When the various details of the conspiracy were one by one unfolded Billie was appalled at the magnitude of the danger which he had so narrowly escaped.

"Only for your thoughtfulness, dearest Janet," he declared, "imagine what would have happened to me. At this minute I would have either been dead, a wretched suicide, or else have been aboard that steamer, out on the broad Atlantic, a prey to every pang of regret, and almost ready to jump overboard to end it all."

"Ah! yes, Billie, but we owe everything to this good friend here. Who but he would have suspected the presence of a plot in the beginning? And who else could have followed every little clew, until finally it ended in his discovering that Henry Pillsbury had never been injured in the least, but was playing a part? Thank him with all your heart, for we owe all our present happiness to his labor."

But it was a pleasure to the veteran detective to realize that once more he had been enabled to right a grave wrong, and foil the schemes of a wicked man. He shook hands with the three happy people, and would not let Mr. Throgmorton mention such a thing as pay for his services. All the same, a check came to him later for a snug sum, which those three who signed the accompanying letter declared he must accept with their most heartfelt thanks.

Later still he learned that Hollis Sutcliffe had fled from New York between two days, having been concerned in some big swindle. They never caught him, and in all probability he may still be prosecuting his audacious games under that smug demeanor in some foreign capital; unless, as Old Fox Slavin suspects, he is doing time for his misdeeds in the galleys of France.

And Annesley, taking warning from his narrow escape, turned over a new leaf, so that since that day he has been a credit to his family name.

The End.

❧ ❧ ❧

After Christmas.

"Hang Christmas gifts, anyway!" growled Pinner, as he surveyed a burnt leather lion suspended upon the wall.

"That is precisely what you have done with that one," remarked the facetious guest.

"Yes," returned Pinner sadly, "I had to do it. Cousin Tibby made that thing and Cousin Tibby is the daughter of a rich aunt. So the lion hangs here. You can see it is as crosseyed as one of Raphael's cherubs. Tibby drops in every once in a while to see if it is still hanging there.

"My wife has a friend who is artistic, too. Darn it! Every one is artistic these days. Our parlor is decorated up with goodness knows what! The wife of my boss gave my wife a beautiful thing, but my wife doesn't know what it's for. I have been looking and inquiring around, consulting the encyclopedia and various works of reference, but I can't identify it.

"We shall have to have that beautiful gift in action New Year's Day, when the boss and his wife call on us, and how can we use it properly when we don't know what it's for?

"The boss has a weakness for useful presents, too. He gave me a tobacco pouch. I have been accustomed to pour my tobacco directly from the sack into my pipe. I can't get the hang of the pouch, especially an intricate and fancy one. Cigar cases and match safes are the same.

"And neckties! No one ever wears a Christmas necktie unless it is the only one he has or unless he thinks he is going to meet the person who gave it to him."

❧ ❧ ❧

Mistaken Ideas.

"I don't know whether I will sit with you fellows or not," said Dubbs to the group in the smoker. "The minister is dining at our house tonight, and I will not be in the proper mood if I associate with you fellows."

"There's where you are wrong," said Smudger, shifting his cigar to the other corner of his mouth. "The minister won't want any hifalutin' talk from you. He gets all of that he requires, and besides he can furnish it for himself. Go right ahead and be your usual breezy and open-faced self, and the minister will pass the time much more pleasantly.

"Don't make the mistake that Billings made. Billings got word that some of his wife's relatives were coming from the country and he said to his son: 'My boy, you and I must change our mode of life. These country bumpkins are in the habit of going to bed at nine o'clock and they won't know a thing but crops and chickens and cows. We'll have to bone up on the poultry journals so you can talk to the girl about milking and feeding chickens, and I'll have to talk to the old man about the weevil and how to cure it.'

"That's where he was wrong. He didn't know much about farmers. He didn't realize that they had a 'phone in that farmhouse connected with the city, that they had two mails a day, and that the girl was a civic reformer.

"The consequence was that the girl, who wanted to talk civics and how to cure the evils of the city and who was cognizant of every crooked deal that had been put over by the administration for the last two years, thought the boy a regular boob; and the old man, who knew the batting average of every player in the league, thought the city man the worst mossback he had ever seen.

"So, if you don't want to get off on the wrong foot, refrain from springing solemn talk on the minister. He'd see through you right away."

"I rise to report," said the young man of the party, "that the aforementioned remarks are correct. The girl of the present day, town or country girl, will not listen to tennis talk, styles or poetry, or the dulcet guitar. She is interested in slums and reforms. The slums are the thing.

"If you start anything about balls or bridge she will look at you as if you were Old Man Methuselah."

"I am convinced," said Dubbs, settling himself in the smoker with his cronies. "I will steep myself in low-brow talk for the sake of being agreeable to the minister."

❧ ❧ ❧

Abolishing Age.

It is a momentous time, fraught with—well, fraught with something or other. The spirit of change is in the air. Old things pass away, giving place to the new. Father Time, fugiting in his well known Marathon, is passing a given point. He'll get by, of course, but humanity makes a great todo whenever he passes this or that mile post. The system of arbitrary measurement seems to be necessary to men, but it has probably slain more perfectly good people than all wars and famines and pestilences put together. Legions die of old age—by the calendar.

"Three score and ten years I have lived—goodness! And it doesn't seem like forty! But my time's up, and I gotter to be goin.' Good night—be good to the children!" And we go—just because we have the notion that we are wound up for just seventy years.

Whoso lives by the clock must die by the clock. Out with your horologes, your almanacs and calendars! And this all leads up to a suggestion:

January 1st is the day of making resolutions, presumably for the benefit of the resolver and his friends. Very well, then, let us all resolve to quit having birthdays, to quit in any way keeping tab on the flight of years. The better half of our readers, we know, will welcome this suggestion, and the chuckleheaded sex may follow if the suggestion is formalized. Let us then appoint a commission—a commission to abolish age. Do we hear a second?

❧ ❧ ❧

Interpreting.

Mrs. Jones was traveling in Europe, accompanied by her two daughters, Eleanor and Marion. Eleanor planned all the routes they were to take and by what means they should journey, but Marion, who was the only one of the party that could speak any language other than English, was obliged to make all the inquiries necessary for the desided arrangements. As a consequence the others were constantly saying to her, "Ask him this," or, "Ask him that."

One day Mrs. Jones misunderstood what they had planned to do and climbed into the wrong carriage. Eleanor looked at her in desperate silence for a minute or two and then turned to Marion and said, "Ask her to get out!"—Judge.

❧ ❧ ❧

THE MISTLETOE BOUGH.

Oh, the mistletoe bough is all well enough
 With its chance for a sly osculation,
Since a damsel must pay, if she's caught underneath,
 The price of her perilous station.
If a kiss can be given without an excuse
Then the mistletoe bough is indeed of some use!

But happy am I, of lovers most blest,
 Who need no such pretense as this,
But may take any time from my sweetheart's red lips
 That delectable something—a kiss!
The mistletoe plant a perennial must be
To serve as a kissing criterion for me!

Apple blossoms in spring and field flowers sweet
 Will do just as well; the blushing red rose
Makes a perfumed retreat; twas beneath some white 'mums
 I summoned up courage enough to propose.
So the mistletoe bough for others may do,
But I think I'm beyond its assistance, don't you?

—Mazie V. Caruthers in Lippincott's.

❧ ❧ ❧

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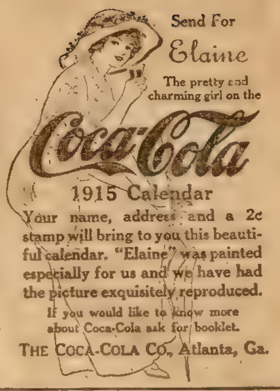
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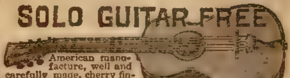
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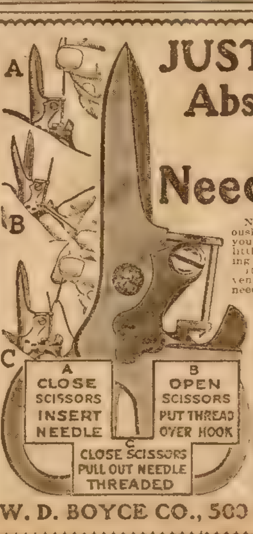
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Obtaining It.

"Did I understand you to say he lived here with credit to himself?"

"Yes. When he left he owed everybody in town."

ALL SORTS.

Some people think; and there are some
Who gravely blink.
Beneath another head they come,
They think they think.

A Lively Christmas Present

Too Easy.

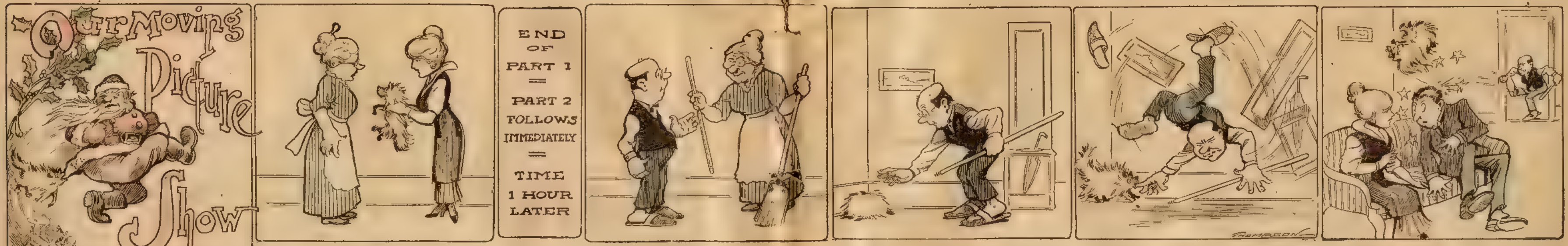
"Have you been able to meet all the demands of your creditors?"

"Meet them! I haven't been able to avoid them."

Parlor Tricks.

Bill—"Did you ever take part in any parlor magic?"

Jill—"Oh, yes; that's how my wife hypnotized me into marrying her."



Daisy—"Oh, mother, look at the perfectly lovely [illegible]ar little doggie George gave me for Christmas."

Mother—"Now, [illegible]a, you take this handle and go into the front hall [illegible] the mop it belongs on."

Pa—"It's funny the women can't keep their mops and handles together, but anyway there the blamed mop is."

"Holy Moses, leggo! Somebody pull this varmint loose from me! Help!"

Pa—"There, you pop-eyed pinhead, is your Christmas present! Take it and beat it out of here."

His Decision.

Recently, in a justice court in the State of Kansas, some wheat in the stack had been attached, and it became necessary, through an order of the court, to have the same thrashed.

One of the workmen among the thrashers put in a voucher for eleven dollars, which seemed entirely too high to the court.

The court questioned the workman concerning his labor, and asked him how much he charged per day. He replied: "Three dollars."

The court then asked him how many days he worked, and the workman replied: "Two days."

The court then asked the laborer how he figured the bill at eleven dollars, since he only worked two days at three dollars per day.

The witness replied: "I didn't figure it; I just decided on it."

◆

Saving Money.

A man went into a shop the other day and asked to see some patent gas burners.

The shopkeeper showed him some. Picking one up, the man asked what that would do.

"Oh," said the shopkeeper, "that will save half the gas."

"If you put me in two I shan't have any gas bill to pay."

◆

Her Christmas Present.

Agent—"What's the matter with your last place?"

Domestic—"Oi don't like th' Christmas present th' missus gave me. It's a silver clock."

"That certainly is a nice present."

"Yis, but, sure, ivery marnin' befar daylight it do go all to paces, an' scares th' loif out av me."

◆

She Was "Single."

Mistress—"Why, Mary, isn't this your Sunday afternoon out? Aren't you going for a walk this lovely day?"

Mary—"Please, 'm, I'd rather stay in. You see, most of the people out on a Sunday is couples and I don't want to be conspicuous."

◆

The Rude Man.

"Here, waiter," said the rude man in the cafe. "Tell the orchestra to play 'Carmen' while I eat this beefsteak."

"Yes, sir. Might I inquire why?"

"I want to hear the toreador song. I feel like a bull fighter."

◆

Mr. Wise—"That bank treasurer had been stealing for twenty years!"

Mrs. Wise—"Yes, but he wasn't half bad at that! He'd been with the bank for over forty years."

What Bobby Did.

Bobby has just returned from his first Christmas party, and mamma, who has a visitor, is very proud.

"Well, Bobby, boy, did you have a good time?" asks mamma.

"Uh, huh," mutters Bobby.

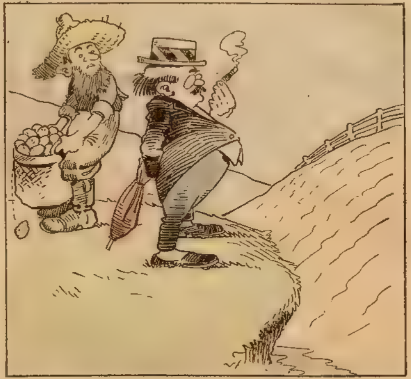
"And now tell mamma and her friend what did you do at the party."

"Frowed up."

Very Literary.

"Colonel Brown seems to be very literary," remarked a visitor to the Brown household to the negro maid, glancing at a pile of magazines lying on the floor.

"Yes, sah," replied the ebony faced girl; "yas, sah, he sholey am literary. He jes' nat'elly littahs things all over dis yer house. I should say he shore was literary."



Summer Boarder—"What a beautiful view that is!"

Farmer—"Wal, p'raps 'tis. But if you had to plow that view, harrow it, cultivate it, hoe it, mow it, fence it and pay taxes on it, it would look derned ornery!"

NEW YEAR'S EVE.

New Year! Toot! Toot!
Hooray! Pop! Fizz!
Who cares a hoot
What am? Who is?

'Tis New Year's Eve,
[illegible] sorrow pale!
Why should we grieve?
Let's go to jail!

Let care go bang.
Who gives a dash?
Wow! Zowie! Bang!
[illegible] Whoopee! Crash!

◆

The Horse for Him.

A Scottish farmer of a miserly disposition bought a horse at a fair. On the way home he thought a drink of water would refresh it, so he got a pail of water, but the animal would not take it. When he got home he offered it a feed of corn, but to his surprise it would not touch that, either.

"Weel," he muttered to himself, "if only I was sure ye were a guid worker, ye're the verra horse for me."

◆

The Best Advice.

Mr. Meekly—"Our neighbor's son is always thrashing my boy. What shall I do about it?"

Lawyer—"Teach him how to fight. Ten dollars, please."

In the Balance.

"Give me two seats in the balance," said a man stepping up to the box office window the other afternoon.

"In the what?" asked the ticket seller, fearing that she had misunderstood.

"I said I wanted two seats in the balance."

The ticket seller racked her brain trying to solve the puzzle and finally, giving it up, she asked the man to explain just what he wanted.

"On this sign out here it says, balcony 25c for the first three rows. It says balance 15c. I want two in the balance."

Then the ticket seller understood.

◆

THE DAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

Well, it is over now!
(That suggests Browning),
We are in clover now,
Let us cease frowning
Zounds! Here a gift is in
From friends forgotten!
This lute a rift is in,
Ain't the luck rotten?

◆

Henpeck.

"I wish my wife was less firm in keeping her New Year's resolution."

"What was it?"

"She resolved that I would quit smoking."

IT'S HERE AT LAST.

Now comes at last the dull New Year,
It's here and none may doubt it,
But it is out of date, I fear,
It was so slow about it!
The 1916 magazines
Have been out several weeks now,
And 1916 type machines
Are what a fellow [illegible] now.

The 1917 motor car
Now every agent's selling,
And 1919 liens there are
On nearly every dwelling.
The politician up to date
(We have him, too, in plenty),
Is boldly trying to inflate
His boom of 1920.

This is indeed a rapid age
For plutocrat [illegible]
In future business we engage
And look back on the present.
It has its joys, it has its gloom
The latter come quite often
And thus before the vision looms
The 1930 coffin!

◆

Real Provocation.

"I am sure you have had provocation," said the relative, "or you would not be so determined to leave your husband."

"Provocation!" echoed the indignant woman. "I bought Fido a package of dog cake. This morning I made biscuits for breakfast. Can you believe me when I tell you I found that brute of a man trying to feed Fido my biscuits and coax the dear little pet's perfectly good dog cakes away from him?"

◆

Wasn't Quite Sure.

"What do you understand by 'edible fungi'?"

"It has somethin' to do with mushrooms an' toadstools," replied Farmer Corntossel. "But whether it's what you swaller or what happens to you afterward I wouldn't like to say without writin' to the department."

Objected to War.

"Now," said the principal to one o[illegible] at th[illegible] in which [illegible] had to[illegible] on the horrors of war, "do you object to war, my boy?"

"Yes, sir. I do," was the fervent answer.

"Now, tell us why."

"Because," said the youth, "wars make history, an' I just hate history."

◆

Prepared.

"Have you put [illegible] sauerkraut this fall, [illegible]?"

"The [illegible] was so hard because of the war that I only put up fifteen barrels in case of sickness."

◆

An [illegible]

The Lawyer (fiercely)—"Are you telling the truth?"

Badgered Witness (wearily)—"As much of it as you will let me."

NEW YEAR COUNSEL.

Sign the pledge,
Make the vow
Boldly turn
The new leaf over.
Cease from folly,
Do it now.
Be no more a
Footless rover.

Quit the cards,
Chuck the weed,
Burn the pipe
And break the bottle;
Be sedate [illegible]
Go and read—
[illegible]
[illegible] Aristotle!

Settle up,
Settle down!
Too long with
Delight you've tarried,
Do the thing up
Good and brown,
Do your penance, man—
Get married.

◆

Excellent Boots.

Talking about a shortage of food at one period during his last expedition, Sir Ernest Shackleton tells an amusing story of one of his companions. On his return to England his bootmaker met him and asked:

"How did you find those boots I made for you?"

"Best I ever tasted!" was the prompt reply.

◆

Slowly Mending.

Two suffragists were talking one evening at the club over a game of billiards.

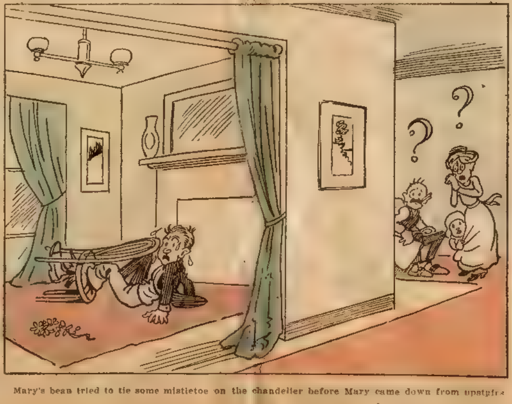
"How is your husband?" the first asked.

"Slowly mending," replied the other.

"Oh, I didn't know he was ill," said the first.

"He isn't ill," the other suffragist explained, laughing heartily. "He's slowly mending my khaki riding breeches."

A CHRISTMAS TRAGEDY



Mary's beau tried to tie some mistletoe on the chandelier before Mary came down from upstairs.

Hard to Answer.

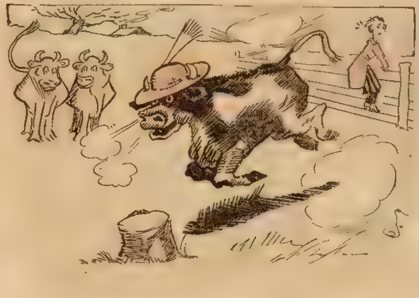
A cook who had burned up a piece of veal weighing four pounds threw it away and reported to her mistress that the cat had eaten the meat. The lady placed the cat upon the scales and found it weighed exactly four pounds.

"There, Bridget," she said, "are the four pounds of meat, but where is the cat?"

Obedient.

Little Anna received three dolls among her Christmas gifts. Her abundant supply caused her to become slightly careless, and one day the arm came off one, exposing the sawdust stuffing.

"Well, you dear, obedient dolly," she exclaimed. "I knew I had told you to chew your food fine, but I didn't think you would chew it as fine as that."



Cow—"I can hardly believe it! There is Snorter wearing a red hat, and he always did dislike that color so."

Maggie's Record.

"Maggie," said the inexperienced young thing to the cook, "the biscuits were a sight. If you can't do better next time I will have to discharge you."

"Ye will, will ye?" Maggie retored. "I'll have ye know, mum, that I've been workin' out two years, an' I've worked for eighty-nine of the best families in town, an' I ain't ever bin discharged yet. I'm leavin' this afternoon for a better place."

◆

Egotistical.

An egotistical man who believes himself the center, the object and the cause of everything that exists and everything that takes place, said to his friend one day:

"It is only to me that such misfortunes happen?"

"What is the matter?"

"Don't you see that it is raining?" he answered.

◆

A Blessing.

"Your wife used to like to sing and she played the piano a lot. Now we don't hear her at all. How's that?"

"She hasn't the time. We have two children."

"Well, well! After all, children are a blessing!"

◆

A Dangerous Occupation

"Does my practicing make you nervous?" asked the man who is learning to play the cornet.

"It did when I first heard the neighbors discussing it," replied the sympathetic person. "But now I'm getting so I don't care what happens to you."

FOR JANUARY SECOND.

Of flippancy we don't approve,
Especially in others.
But, Mr. President, we move—
And suffragettes and brothers—

That whereas joy upon the first
With uproar's celebrated,
And whereas, when we're feeling worst
To silence we are fated,

Be it resolved (here write by whom)
This program we shall vary
And celebrate with noisy gloom
The twoth of January!

◆

Fido Was Undecided.

"Oh, Mr. Smith!" cried the young lady, as she greeted her caller. "So you have been making friends with Fido! And do you think he likes you?"

"Well," said Mr. Smith grimly, "I don't believe he's quite decided yet—he's only had one bite of me, and he seems to want another."

◆

Superfluous Adornment.

"I am now engaged on a beautiful design for a new coin," said the artist.

"I don't see why we need it," replied Miss Cayenne. "You can't make money so good-looking as to render it any more popular than it already is."

◆

His Diagnosis.

She—"I have got four new wrinkles in my face since I married you."

He—"Too bad! I presume it comes from worrying over milliners' bills which I can't pay."

Homing Instinct.

At the monthly meeting of a certain homing society one of the members related an interesting experience. He had recently sold a couple of "squeakers"—very young pigeons—to a man whose cote was two hundred miles away. He sent them off by train, and was astounded to find them back in the old cote two days later.

There was a painful silence, broken at length by the president's "Wonderful!"

"You doubt my word?" demanded the narrator of the story.

"Not a bit of it!" was the reply. "It's a strange coincidence, that's all. I sold the very same man a setting of eggs in the middle of June. Before the end of the month those birds had hatched out and had flown back to me! Homing instinct's a wonderful thing!"

◆

Calling Him Names.

The family was a big one, and the census taker had been obliged to make a long call in order to get the necessary data. And he had to ask a great many questions. Little Althea had listened with burning indignation in her breast for what she considered his unwarranted questions; but she kept quiet until, just as he was vanishing out of the door, she could contain herself no longer, and she burst out with, "Say, what did you ask so many questions for, you old cur-i-ostrich?"

◆

The New Joker.

"Well, I see the war is all over," announced a fellow who was trying to be a contributor.

"What do you mean, all over?" replied the fellow he brought along with him as a feeder.

"All over Europe!" cried the original comedian, with a shriek of laughter.

◆

How It Felt.

Jay Green—"I had a ride in my cousin's automobile while I was up t' the city."

Aaron Allred—"Ye did? How'd seem?"

Jay Green—"Wa-al, it felt a good deal like fallin' into a mighty deep well, only ye dropped straight ahead instead o' downward."

◆

The Early Bird.

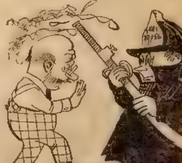
"Did you come out well on Christmas morning, Willie?"

"Yes, sir. I got more things than any of my brothers or sisters."

"Indeed! How did that come about?"

"I got up two hours before they did."

◆



Mr. Germpop—"Fireman, before you turn the hose on my burning domicile can you assure me the water you use is free from bacteria?"

Pansy Wayne's Honeymoon

Or, The Green Motor Cloak

By C. Mackie

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CHAPTER VII.

ANOTHER PRISONER.

AT THE strange sound proceeding from the corner of that lower room of the old mill, Pansy sank to the floor and crouched against the rough stone wall. The sound was repeated again and again, a moaning cry that touched her tender heart to pity, yet she was afraid to venture in its vicinity, fearing she knew not what. But at last her womanly pity drowned her fears and she arose and moved silently toward the corner whence those groans proceeded.

At last she was very near them. "Who is there?" she whispered in a shaking voice. The groans ceased at once and there was a stirring noise, at which Pansy drew back

"Who is it?" asked a voice hoarsely.

"What is the matter?" responded Pansy in the same low whisper.

"I am hurt—I want to get out of this confounded hole—you are a woman—can't you find out if my wife——" there came a sigh and silence.

"He has fainted," thought Pansy, searching for another match.

The swoon of the stranger was of short duration; he sat up abruptly as Pansy scratched a match and bent over him. That was the most amazing moment of their lives when Pansy Wayne looked down into the upturned face of her missing husband. His eyes searched her face incredulously.

"Pansy — Pansy — not my girl?" he muttered hoarsely and caught her hand to reassure his doubts.

"Dick—Dick!" was all Pansy could cry as the match died out and left them in darkness, but to Dick Wayne and his wife that underground room was brilliantly lighted with happiness.

"Tell me how you found me," said Dick at last, and so they sat there hand in hand while Pansy related her story.

"And you?" she questioned when he had denied all knowledge of the note that old Lew Petty had brought to her.

"I went out to the car," said Dick in a tired voice, "and had just backed it out of the shed when I felt a crashing blow on the head, and the next thing I knew I awoke in this den. My head is still spinning from that blow, and I believe I lost a little blood in the bargain."

"I searched my pockets and found they had cleaned me out of everything—watch, scarfpin, ring and money. I haven't seen a soul since I came here until you appeared like an angel of light!"

"We must try to escape now," said Pansy.

"I cannot," said Dick hopelessly. "My ankle is chained to a ring in the wall."

"Is there no way we can release you?"

"If I had an iron bar——" began Dick, when Pansy interrupted eagerly,

"I saw one on the floor above, Dick; I will go up and get it."

"No—I cannot allow you to go from my sight again," remonstrated Dick. "Put your fingers on the ring, Pansy, and feel whether the mortar in which it is embedded is hard or dry and crumbling."

"It is dry and broken," announced Pansy. "And here is a sharp stone with which I can dig it out. Let me try."

So for an hour they worked there in the darkness, until Pansy's delicate fingers were torn and bleeding and Dick's hands were in a similar condition; then the ring and bolt came out of the mortar and fell on the floor with a clinking sound of metal.

"Can you ever walk?" asked Pansy.

"I will have these off in a jiffy, dearest," was his reply. "There is a broken link near the ring—there! I am free!" He arose stiffly to his feet and declared that his head felt better.

"Now to escape," he said. "I suppose there is some one on guard outside, but I have a plan. Lying here in the darkness I have made out the outlines of a window yonder that must open upon the river. We can both swim. Shall we trust ourselves to the river, cross to the other side and return to the Inn of the Drum and Bell with the proper authorities to apprehend these people?"

"I am ready," said Pansy.

"Good. Hold fast to me and do not become separated from me again." Dick walked swiftly across the underground room to the small opening which he had believed to be a window.

Upon examination it proved to be an opening in the outer wall, placed there so that repairs might be made to the mill wheel. Wooden shutters closed the window, and when Dick cautiously opened them there was a rush of damp, ill-smelling air from around the mossy wheel.

"We can go out this way—will you trust me?" asked Dick.

"Yes," said Pansy, slipping her hand in his.

Dick painfully clambered into the opening, slipped over the low sill and found a footing in some stone jutting from the foundation. Then he helped Pansy through until she stood beside him, knee-deep in water under the shadow of the old wheel.

Dick reached in and closed the wooden shutters so that his captors might not guess how they had made their escape. They had barely closed the shutters and were clinging precariously to the mossy wheel when there came a sound of a commotion from within the underground room they had just left.

CHAPTER VIII.

MEPHISTO OF THE MOTORCYCLE.

THROUGH a crack in the warped old shutters came a ray of light. Dick placed an eye to the crack and reported what he saw to Pansy

"It's the whole Petty family—I suppose the two men who decoyed us here are the sons, Ferd and Bill, he called them; and, Jove! if there isn't your old friend, Mephisto of the Motorcycle!"

"I heard the sound of a motorcycle long ago," whispered Pansy. "Hark! they are speaking!"

The hoarse voice of old Lew Petty boomed through the underground room:

"He's gone—that's all there is to it—and the girl's gone, too! But we done our part and we want our money—understand?" There was a threatening note in his voice

A more cultured voice made answer. Dick, looking through the crack, reported that it was the motorcyclist who spoke:

"That's all very well, Petty, but I'm doing business with facts—not hard luck stories of prisoners who got away For all I hear, there have been many prisoners in this old shack WHO NEVER DID GET AWAY!" He laugher significantly.

Dick and his wife thought of the skeleton in the granary bin and shuddered.

Petty raised his arms in the air and swore lustily. His two loutish sons drew nearer to Mephisto's back. Mrs. Petty's face turned gray with some great fear and she hurriedly backed out of the room.

"Don't run away, Mrs. Petty," interposed Mephisto, lightly. "They're not going to murder ME!"

As he uttered the words the door closed behind the woman and in the same instant Ferd and Bill leaped on the motorcyclist's back.

From some sagging pocket old Lew Petty had whipped a pistol and was holding it against the stranger's head.

"Well?" leered the old man, "you better say good-by to yourself, mister! It don't do to play crooked with Lew Petty!"

"No?" panted the other, "I suppose you want to do all the crooked business yourself!"

Dick, clinging to the shutter, felt powerless to help the stranger in this unequal struggle for life. If he only had his pistols! But they were up in the Tapestry Room. Had he been alone he might have made sudden entrance through the opening and helped Mephisto in his dire trouble.

But, of course, Pansy needed his protection. Pansy had heard the words and guessed at the struggle which was taking place. She stooped down, and an instant later Dick felt cold steel pressed into his hand. It was Pansy's little automatic. Dick pulled the shutter ajar sufficiently to hold the muzzle of his weapon in the opening. Old Lew Petty still held his weapon at Mephisto's temple, while Ferd, the surliest of the two sons, had whipped out a knife and had poised it over the unsuspecting stranger's back. What murderous breed was this housed in the old Inn of the Drum and Bell?

Dick Wayne was a sure shot, but never had he a more hazardous target than was offered here. How could he stay both those murderous hands? So surely as he shot away the pistol from the old man's hand, just so surely would that glittering knife descend to the stranger's back.

There was a chance if he could cripple the hand that held the knife the old man's aim of the pistol might be deflected and he could count on the stranger helping himself.

"You won't hand over the money, then?" demanded old Lew hoarsely.

"When you produce the couple you were to deliver to me," was the cool reply.

"Then——," began the old man as Ferd's hand began to descend; "then we'll take it anyway, see?"

A crack sounded through the room, the knife flew from Ferd's broken fingers, and that worthy uttered a scream of pain and fell to the floor. During the tableau that followed the motorcyclist saw his advantage and leaped to it. He snatched at Lew's pistol, dropped it into his own pocket, turned swiftly and felled Bill to the floor. Like lightning he whirled around and caught the muscular hands of the old man, snapped a pair of handcuffs about them and threw him aside. He leaped at Bill and performed a like operation and also slipped a pair of the steel bracelets over Ferd's bleeding hands. Then he straightened up and drew a long breath of relief.

"I don't know where you are, friend," he said, cheerily, "but I wish you would show yourself!"

CHAPTER IX.

PENELOPE DAY.

DICK pushed the shutters wide open, lifted Pansy, dripping and limp, to the stone floor of the room and then clambered in himself.

"That's where your friendly shot came from!" ejaculated the stranger as he assisted Pansy to a seat on an overturned box. "You have been in the river?" he questioned, sharply.

"Yes," said Dick; "almost anything is better than imprisonment in this den. Perhaps you can tell me the meaning of the outrage my wife and I have suffered at the hands of these people."

"I can throw some light on the mat-

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ter," said the other, with a dry smile. "You are Nelson Landon of Chicago, aren't you?"

"On the contrary, I am Richard Doran Wayne of New York," replied Dick.

"Wayne of New York, eh? The dickens you are!" The man stared at him incredulously. "And this lady is your wife?"

"Yes," said Dick, proudly

"When were you married?"

"The third of June. This is our honeymoon, you know. These people have made it rather exciting for us."

"And did Petty know that you were not Nelson Landon?" asked the other, sharply.

"He should have known—after he cleaned out my pockets—didn't even leave my card case!" retorted Dick.

"So you were trying to fool me into thinking these were my people!" sneered Mephisto, turning to Lew Petty.

The old man growled in his beard, but Bill Petty spoke sullenly. "The lady wore a green motor cloak—I went up in her room and got it to prove to you they were in the house."

"You wore a green motor cloak?" asked the stranger

"Why, yes," said Pansy; "and, if you please, I would like to know what that has to do with the matter?"

"Everything," said the other, tersely. "The woman I am chasing wore a motor cloak of the same pattern and color. I saw you at the Hindleton Inn, motored ahead to warn these people to stop you if you came the Lower Road, and I waited on the Holly Road to apprehend you myself if you happened that way.

"But I reckoned without the evil reputation of mine host—and his interesting family," he sneered. "They decoyed you to the Drum and Bell and proceeded to rob you, and would have committed murder if you had not escaped their hands. I returned with help to take you to Boston, but when we reached this cellar you had disappeared. My men are waiting outside."

"Who are you?" asked Dick, bluntly.

"My name is Murtagh; I am a private detective. I was employed by Zachariah Day of Chicago to trace and find his eloping daughter, Penelope Day, who ran away with her music-teacher a week ago."

"Penelope Day!" cried Pansy. "Why, that is the name Florine mentioned. Miss Day bought the other green motor coat."

"Exactly," said Murtagh. "I traced her to New York and thence to Boston, where they were married. They were in a small, red motor and were scheduled to stop at the Hindleton Inn. I was there on a motorcycle. I did not have a picture of Miss Day, but I had an excellent decription of her and, pardon me, Mrs. Wayne, you filled the bill exactly, even to the green motor cloak!"

"And your bird has flown, after all!" laughed Dick.

Murtagh shrugged his shoulders.

"I've lost the trail now that you people have crossed it," he admitted. "All I can do is to go back to old man Day and tell him he better make up his mind to support his son-in-law. Take it all in all, music is a harmless sort of pastime. And Zachariah Day has got millions to spend that way."

"I am glad that everything has turned out no worse than it is," said Dick. "I guess we better get back to the Tapestry Room, pick up our belongings and start that red car on to the Holly Inn. We should get there for breakfast, anyway."

"Perhaps you'd like your valuables first," said Murtagh. And going from one to another of the prisoners, he searched their garments and brought forth all of Dick's belongings save the cash, which Dick said he could replace as soon as he reached the next banking town.

Leaving the three Pettys in the cellar, Murtagh picked up a candle and led the way through the door by which he had entered the room. They found themselves in a back passage that opened on the untidy kitchen. Mrs. Petty was nodding over a cup of tea and only gave them a shrewish look as they passed by. Dick picked up Pansy's green cloak and bonnet from a chair in the parlor, and so the three went up to the Tapestry Room, where daylight was just stealing through the windows. The two men shouldered the trunks and bags, and Pansy, having changed her wet garments and slipped into the voluminous cloak, followed them out of the ill-omened house and entered the little red car, which they found under the trees in the yard. Several keen-eyed men who were scattered around held a low-toned talk with Murtagh before he took a seat on the step of the Red Streak and accompanied the Waynes to the Holly Inn, where they had a gay breakfast together.

Then they parted with Mephisto of the Motorcycle.

"I hope your adventures are all over," he said as he shook hands.

Pansy thought of the dreadful note she had received and shuddered. Murtagh had told them that Lew Petty had once been a brilliant lawyer, but that the curse of drink had descended upon him and his family, to their utter ruination.

"I wish you success, Murtagh," said Dick, with twinkling eyes; "but I hope Miss Penelope and her husband keep out of your hands!"

Murtagh smiled ruefully. Even if Mr. Day cut down on what he had promised to pay the detective, Murtagh had Dick's check for a generous sum inside his wallet. So the affair of the green motor cloaks would prove profitable, after all! His saturnine face wore a softened smile as he watched the honeymooners starting on their way once more. Dick looked unutterably happy and Pansy was adorably lovely in her great joy.

And to those two it was as if they had never seen the Inn of the Drum and Bell, save when Pansy dreamed of that bin in the granary room or heard the ghostly echo of drum and bell which had terrorized her night in the Tapestry Room. But Dick was always there to soothe her fears and remind her everything else was a dream save their own perfect happiness

The End.

* * *

Isobel the Czar's Spy.

(Continued from page seven.)

caused the weapon to fly from Strouse's grasp and spin across the room. In another moment the two men were struggling for the mastery. From one side of the room to the other they went, equally matched, and both panting like grappling lions. Strouse, despite his stature, had the strength and tenacity of a giant. He baffled every move on his adversary's part and at length, with his long fingers in Streuve's throat, he bore him against the wall and held him there. Not a word was spoken during the entire struggle. Streuve saw that his end had come. There was no mercy in the orbs that almost touched his purpling cheeks. Strouse did not for a second relax his terrible clutch.

"Murderer!" hissed Streuve.

There was no reply in words, but the death clutch got new power. At last Strouse opened his long hands. He saw a breathless body sink along the wall and fall heavily upon the floor at his feet.

"What a fool he was!" he commented, drawing back. "There was good work in the wretch, but he knew too much."

As Strouse finished he cast another look at the thing on the floor and went toward the door.

"I've cleared the way to mademoiselle," said he. "Woe to the reptiles that hiss in my path."

He tripped down the stair with a triumphant gleam in his eyes. Once he put his hand to his bosom and smiled.

"It's there yet," he nodded. "Now I have no one but the fool Englishman to reckon with," and with this he opened the lower door and went out into the street.

No one but Lassiter to reckon with? A revelation was yet to come to little Strouse.

Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of this remarkable story You will miss a great treat if you do not read it to the end. We will give you constantly the very best stories of entertainment that money will buy, so send in your subscription and take the Ledger regularly, if you are not doing so. You will not regret it.

* * *

Helpful Hints.

"No wonder the women have the best of us all the time," remarked Dubin to his friend, Oucher. "It is the women's magazines that do it.

"These magazines give the women pointers continually—the husbands have no such blessed privilege. Of course, the farmers interchange ideas on how to farm and the makers of farm machinery get together and exchange ideas. We all profit by one another's experiences in a business way, but in a domestic way the women have all the best of it!

"For instance, they learn how to make a stingy husband loosen up and come across. One lady will tell her experience in print, as follows: 'My husband was very stingy. Every time I ordered sugar he would say, "What! All that sugar gone already! What are you doing with it?" If I bought shoes for the children he would say, "What? Shoes again! Surely not shoes, and again!" So getting tired of this kind of noise I determined to cure my husband of stinginess. I did so in three weeks' time by the following method——' and then will follow the method.

"Now, the women who have stingy husbands all sit up and read this method. They learn it and try it out on hubby right away.

"Then there are articles in these magazines on 'How to Make Hubby Attentive'; 'How to Make My Husband See My Attractive Points'; 'How to Make a Husband Chop Wood'; 'How to Make a Husband Show Off for Company'; 'How to Make a Husband Wipe the Dishes,' and 'How to Make Him Attend to the Children.'

"All these things, you will admit, are very useful little bits of information for a wife. The list of things that husbands have been made to do is very long. 'How I Got My Husband to Tango'; 'How I Got My Husband to Mend the Hose'; 'How I Got My Husband to Call with Me Upon the Neighbors.' "

"That will be about all," said Oucher. "For heaven's sake, don't tell me any more! These articles you have been reading are written by men and old maids. They don't know what they are talking about. When the husband refuses to split wood in these articles, he says, 'No, madam, I will not split wood. E'en though the sky should fall and all the seas run dry, I will toil not, neither will I split.' You never heard a man talk like that outside of picture shows and magazines. So I say the whole thing is a fiction.

"These articles that have caused you so much uneasiness are of no practical value. The women who don't know how to manage their own husbands without the aid of these magazines are rare."

* * *

HIS CHRISTMAS WISH.

For Christmas? You ask me what would I receive
That should make all my life seem complete?
I wait not for fancy to conjure and weave
The impossible gifts I would greet
With welcoming smiles if they came to my hands—
But I'll tell you the gift I bespeak:
No jewel brought forth from some far away lands,
But a wet little kiss on my cheek

Ofttimes I recall it—the laugh in the dawn,
And the marveling gaze at the tree,
Then the two little arms of the child who is gone,
As she clambered atop of my knee
And clasped me, and held me, and whispered the word
Of the gift that she gave, which was "This"—
And I feigned my surprise, but my eyes were ablurred
When my cheek felt the wet little kiss.

Aye, that was a treasure! No bauble of gold,
No rare jewel, nor trinket of worth
Could thrill me with joy to a measure untold—
There is nothing you'll find on the earth
Would bring me the joy that was mine in the days
When she lived And the gift that I crave
Is her smile as she looked at the tree in amaze,
And the wet little kiss that she gave.

For Christmas? For Christmas, I want to sit here
When the dawn sends its first silver gleams
And to think of the light and the laughter last year
And to picture her face in my dreams
Till out from the silence that holds us apart
Shall be given the boon that I seek:
The warmth of her arms, and the thrill of my heart,
And her wet little kiss on my cheek.

—W. D. N.

* * *

Most Helpful Books.

A reference to books reminded Senator John R. Thornton of Louisiana of the literary conversation between Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Brown.

Mrs. Smith, according to the narrative of the Senator, was very fond of reading, and while on a visit to Mrs. Brown one afternoon she started a book talk with a view to discovering what particular work her hostess liked best.

"You have quite a number of books, I see," remarked the visitor, glancing around the room. "Which do you think is the most helpful to you?"

"Webster's dictionary without a doubt," was the prompt response of Mrs. Brown.

"You don't really mean it!" exclaimed the visitor, assuming for some reason a look of surprise. "May I ask in what particular way?"

"Certainly," was the obliging reply of the hostess. "The baby sits on it at the table, and it saves the price of a high chair."

* * *

The Bride's Idea.

Ex-Mayor Shank of Indianapolis, discussing the high cost of living, said:

"It's the consumer's fault, after all. The consumer should make laws to protect himself against rapacity. Judging from present conditions, the consumer's ideas seem a good deal like the bride's.

"A husband a few weeks after the honeymoon came home and said in desolate accents:

" 'My love, I'm heart-broken. My salary has been cut down 15 per cent.'

" 'Oh, that's nothing,' cried the young bride, cheerily. 'Cheap & Co. are advertising perfectly lovely things cut down 25 per cent.' "

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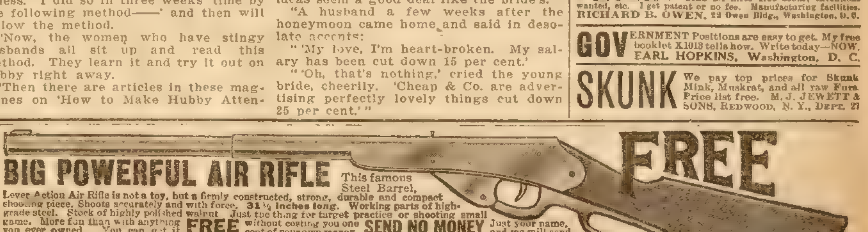

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Dec. 13, 1914.

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MS WPS

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Home and Health

Kerosene Useful.

Not all housekeepers realize the various uses to which kerosene may be put. It is one of the most valuable cleansing agents that can be kept in the house.

A spoonful of it put into a clothes boiler will make the clothes whiter and sweeter than without it, nor will there be any odor from the use of such a small quantity. In connection with clothes it may be said that a raw lemon, sliced, peel and all, will have the same effect in a boiler.

This preparation is efficacious in removing heavy grease from children's clothes, especially that gathered from automobiles and oiled streets. The greasy portion of cloth is laid in a small basin and the spot is covered with kerosene. It stands for an hour or more, when the cloth is rubbed between the hands or with dry cloth.

If the heavy grease comes out, then it should be rinsed in kerosene again and given a final washing with hot water in which is ammonia. If the grease does not come out after the first hour's soaking that kerosene should be poured off and fresh applied for another hour.

Leather shoes that have become stiff from wetting will have their flexibility renewed by wiping them with a cloth, well wet with kerosene. They should stand with that moisture over them for an hour or more, and then be wiped with a dry cloth before blacking or polishing.

Kerosene, either diluted or of full strength, cleans white paint beautifully, removing the most obstinate stains. It need not be washed off afterward, but merely dried, for the odor will soon evaporate if the windows are left open. Rubbed full strength on a porcelain tub, it will make the bath look like new. It should be thoroughly washed off at once, lest it scent the next bath.

❧

Needlework, Etc.

Never forget to thread a needle from the opposite end of the thread from where it is broken off.

In selecting draperies for windows do not forget to look at the fascinating cotton goods in the dress goods departments. The mercerized fabrics as well as the voiles lend themselves admirably to this purpose.

Collars which have their buttonholes torn asunder may be mended with tape, which should be joined on to the collar in the double, then cut and worked in the necessary buttonholes. This is not easy.

When sewing hooks and eyes on the hem or plait of a waist to prevent stitching through goods to the right side slip a piece of pasteboard between the plait and, as you sew on each hook or eye, push the pasteboard along. This is very simple, but will often save a lot of bother.

Pretty bureau covers may be made from the borders of fine table covers that are worn in the middle Take two pieces of the border of the length desired and join the two selvedges with inch wide insertion. Do this nicely, so that the work will be perfectly smooth. Hem all the way around the cloth by hand and finish the edge with lace to match the insertion.

To make an inexpensive pad put between two layers of cheesecloth or some washable material several layers of paper; the larger the sheets the better. Overcast the edges of the cloth and knot with thread here and there as you do in a comfort. The cost is small and the paper gives the necessary body and protection. Moreover, there is no fiber to stick to the glossy surface of the table when a hot dish is put upon it.

❧

Health Notes.

Three parts of white vaseline and one of bismuth makes an old and well-known ointment for skin diseases.

A Honolulu remedy for sore throat is fresh pineapple, as much as one can digest. The effect is said to be marvelous.

Among the various causes for crossness of children are some very common ones, such as hunger or thirst, improper sleep, overeating, uncomfortable clothing, and the pernicious feeding of sweets.

Brushing is good for the hair, as it brings the blood to the scalp, and the blood brings nourishment. A shampoo once a month or oftener, if the hair gets very dirty, is also essential to keep the hair soft, fluffy and healthy.

Egg yolk nourishes the nervous system. It contains lecithin, an essential to all nerve substance. This lecithin can be purchased in the extracted form. It is said that children and young animals fed with lecithin grow more rapidly.

For the little hacking cough that keeps the household awake at night, bind a cloth wrung out of quite cold water around the throat and over this pin a dry cloth. One application is usually enough, but if not, more than twice wetting the cloth will not be required.

❧

Take Time for Rest.

As a rule, women who lead active lives are too much inclined to disregard the subject of their health. As long as they can go on with their daily round of duties, they do not stop to inquire the reason why they are frequently troubled with headache, indigestion, or sleeplessness, and that they take their petty worries more to heart than was formerly the case. In fact, they fail to recognize that their powers of physical endurance have a limit, and that a continual strain of mind and body cannot go on forever. A woman, whether she is burdened with social duties, home duties, or remunerative occupation, can generally, by the exercise of a little thought and management, avoid overtaxing her strength. She should remember the greater the tax on the mental and physical enegies the more need there is for sufficient rest, not only in the form of sleep, but in such recreation as will divert her thoughts into another channel, and produce a sense of invigoration. If possible, a time should be set apart during the day when she can be left undisturbed, even if only for an hour. Such a pause in a busy life will do much to restore the flagging nerve power, and will enable a woman to be a brighter and more agreeable companion than if she is utterly tired out.

❧

Fashion Notes.

Entire skirts are occasionally made of Roman stripes.

Upstanding ruff collars are more and more in favor.

Adaptations of the old-time princess model are shown among the new gowns

Both figured and plain chiffons are used in making the handsomest blouses.

There is a satisfactory and pretty silk-and-wool crepe de chine used for blouses.

The present popularity of black velvet bodices girdles, capes and other accessories is noticeable

If the skirt does not flare enough, use a reed or thick wire to get the right line. This is done in many of the high priced models and can be copied by you

Fawn and straw brown silk linings are used for the immensely popular covert coating suits, and for the equally well-liked marine blue ones there are linings to match. Shot silk is much used again for the purpose.

Many of the newest blouses have high necks. That is to say, they are buttoned right up to the throat in the old fashioned manner. The decollete blouse is gradually going out of fashion. At the present moment the most popular models are those which are medium high.

❧

For the Housewife.

Mice object to camphor, which if put in places frequented by them, will drive them away completely.

The milk added to potatoes while mashing them should be hot to keep them from becoming soggy.

A tiny bit of butter is often an improvement to cake frostings, especially chocolate or caramel.

Kerosene will soften boots and shoes that have been hardened by water and makes them as pliable as new.

Most people sprinkle fried apples with sugar just before serving. Try using salt instead and see what an entirely different flavor is given the dish.

A tablespoonful of olive oil and another of molasses added to the griddle cake batter is worth while trying. This keeps the cakes from sticking and also aids in browning.

If vinegar is added instead of water to moisten stove polish, two good results will be obtained. First, the work of polishing will not be as hard, and secondly the polish will last much longer.

Before turning oyster soup into the tureen put into the dish a heaping tablespoonful of finely minced celery and half as much chopped parsley. The flavor of the soup will be much enhanced.

❧

To Preserve Silk.

Silk would frequently wear longer, in dresses and other garments, if it were differently cared for when not in use. More than any other fabric, it has the faculty of growing thin in spots where it is most often folded or pressed, and this fact accounts for mysterious holes that appear when least expected.

A petticoat or dress of it should always be hung. It is the greatest mistake to lay away any such garment in a drawer, even though it may have plenty of room there, and no weight on top. The creases which it naturally takes cause the material to weaken and when there comes the pressure of wearing the fabric will go before its time.

A handsome silk petticoat, or dress, which is not worn often, should not only be hung on two hooks, spreading the garment at the waist, but at least once a week it should be taken down, gently shaken, and again hung, when it will fall into slightly different folds. All dampness should be kept from it, for silk rots from its effect.

❧

A Tasty Dish.

When the usual fried, boiled and scrambled eggs have become tiresome, try this for a simple breakfast or luncheon dish. It is easy to make, pleasing to both eye and taste: Put a small piece of butter on a little earthenware ramekin; allow it to melt, then add the crumbs from a slice of either fresh or stale bread well moistened with a couple of tablespoonfuls of milk, and either one or two eggs slightly beaten. Stir all the ingredients for a moment, then sprinkle over the top from one to two tablespoonfuls of grated cheese; season well and cook either on top of the stove or in a slow oven. As soon as the mixture begins to puff up and slightly brown, remove from the fire and serve in the ramekin at once. The ramekins either with or without lids can be purchased for a reasonable sum, and will be found most convenient for individual dishes of this description.

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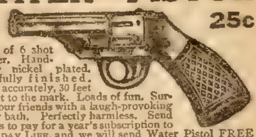

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Does it Flutter, Palpitate or Skip Beats? Have you Shortness of Breath, Tenderness, Numbness or Pain in left side, Dizziness, Fainting Spells, Spots before eyes, Sudden Starting in sleep, Nervousness, Nightmare, Hungry or Weak Spells, Oppressed Feeling in chest, Choking Sensation in throat, Painful to lie on left side, Cold Hands or Feet, Difficult Breathing, Heart Dropsy, Swelling of feet or ankles, or Neuralgia around heart? If you have one or more of the above symptoms, don't fail to use Dr. Kinsman's Guaranteed Heart Tablets. Not a secret medicine. It is said that one person out of every four has a weak heart. Three-fourths of these do not know it, and hundreds wrongfully treat themselves for the Stomach, Lungs, Kidneys or Nerves. Don't take any chances when Dr. Kinsman's Heart Tablets are within your reach. 1000 endorsements furnished.

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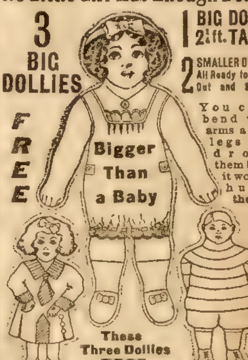

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Chicago Ledger

Entered as second-class matter June 2[illegible], 1885, at the postoffice at Chicago, Illinois, under act of March 3, 1879.

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COPIES WEEKLY.

GENTLE JABS

Too many good resolutions die young.

Kind words and bald heads never dye.

It looks like a perfectly good new year.

Old 1914 was a useful year—it supplied so many horrible examples.

However, the 1915 water wagon will not be an alcohol truck.

Some people marry in haste and then live to have golden weddings.

Don't think that just because a man isn't in jail he must be honest.

All the world loves a lover—he makes such an exhibition of himself.

A tightwad is a man who has more money than friends—and is glad of it.

Knowledge often consists of a lot of miscellany that is not worth knowing.

Occasionally a locomotive engineer tanks up and makes his own head light.

Give the impressionable New Year a chance to like you on first acquaintance.

There would be less need of New Year's resolutions if the headaches preceded the sprees.

Why burn money on New Year's Eve? You will need it for some better purpose later on.

Every time a man sows wild oats he gets a lot of innocent people to help him harvest the crop.

Before a wise girl attempts to manage a husband she first acquires the art of managing a kitchen.

Still, Job's patience wasn't taxed to the limit if his next door neighbor didn't own a $1.98 phonograph.

Show us a man who thinks he knows it all and we can show you a moving picture of a big mistake.

It is said that distance lends enchantment to the view—but not to a man's view of the almighty dollar.

Most of those sneers at New Year's resolutions come from people who ought to make a few—and keep them.

After a week one may take the Christmas tree out and burn it, but alas! the rubber plant stays on forever!

Many a man who starts at the foot of the ladder manages by great grit and determination to be there at the finish.

After carefully hiding away the fussy gift calendars, the tired business man goes forth to buy a calendar that he can use.

Many of our most foresighted business men are setting out their tubs and buckets in expectation of a rain of prosperity next year.

PEPPERS

Overworked.

"When I was having my vacation last summer," says James K. Hackett, "I spent part of it on a farm up in Maine.

"One day the farmer went to the county fair and his hard working wife remained at home to see that the farm suffered no loss during his absence. He returned home just about dark and, coming out on the porch where the wife was taking a little quiet rest, he asked:

"'I'm about tired out, Sarah. Is the cows in the barn?'

"'Yes, long since,' replied the wife.

"'Is the hosses unharnessed an' fed?' he queried.

"'Yes.'

"'Fowls locked up?'

"'Yes.'

"'Wood chopped fer mornin'?'

"'Yes.'

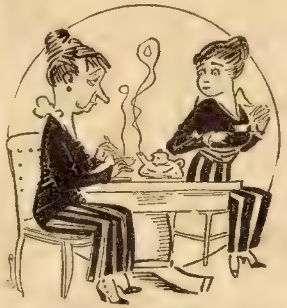
"'Be them ducks plucked an' dressed for market?'

"'Yes.'

"'Wagon wheel mended an' ready to start in?'

"'Yes.'

"'Well, then,' he concluded, with a sigh of relief, 'let me have my supper, Sarah, an' I'll turn in. Farmin' is beginnin' to tell on me.'"



Her Mother—"You and Henry seemed to have quite a heated time last night."

Mrs. Knag—"We had. He made me fairly boil with rage and I roasted him well."

Too Late.

A certain lady in Paris gave periodical dinners, at which assembled most of the best known wits and literati of the day. The rule of the mansion was that while one person discoursed no interruption whatever was permitted. It is said that M. Renan once attended one of these dinners, and, being in excellent vein, talked without a break during the whole repast. Toward the end of the dinner a guest was heard to begin a sentence, but he was silenced by the hostess. After they had left the table, however, she at once informed the extinguished individual that, as M. Renan had now finished his conversation, she would gladly hear what he had to asy. The guest modestly declined; the hostess insisted.

"I am certain it was something of consequence," she said.

"Alas, madam," he answered, "it was indeed; but now it is too late. I should have liked a little more of that iced pudding."

Lauder's Question.

Here is a Lauder story which leaked through the interstices of the Hermit clubhouse. Lauder was being entertained, with Hermit Roger Enright as the host.

In the midst of the merriment Hermit President Frank Meade produced a photograph and passed it across to the inimitable.

"This," he explained, "is a portrait in Highland costume of one of our most active members, a man who is credited with many Hermit stunts. I want you to see him as he looks in his Scotch impersonations. No doubt you can offer him a helpful suggestion or two."

The peerless one took the portrait and gazed at it with becoming gravity.

"He looks very braw," he said. Then he mildly added: "But why has he got his kilt hindside before?"

Not His Fault.

The Secretary of the Department of Agriculture tells a story of a Connecticut farmhand's method of weather prophecy:

"This farmhand believed he could foretell the weather infallibly," said the Secretary. "On a walk with me one afternoon a frog croaked, and he said:

"'We will have clear weather for twenty-four hours. When a frog croaks in the afternoon you may be sure of twenty-four hours of sunshine.' We walked on, and in twenty minutes or so a heavy shower came up, and we were both drenched to the skin.

"'You are a fine weather prophet,' said I, as we hurried homeward through the downpour. 'You ought to be ashamed of yourself.'

"'Oh, well,' said the farmhand, 'the frog lied. It's to blame, not me. Am I responsible for the morals of that particular frog?'"

Preventing Social Errors.

The young man who eats all 'round the circuit ran against this quick-lunch incident recently:

A fastidious person made his way charily into the place. A tumbler of murky water was thumped before him by the young woman on the other side of the counter.

"What's yours?"

"Coffee and rolls, my girl."

One of those iron-heavy, quarter-inch thick mugs of coffee was pushed over the counter. The fastidious person seemed dazed. He looked under the mug and over it.

"But where is the saucer?" he queried.

"We don't give no saucer here. If we did some low brow'd come pilin' in an' drink out of his saucer, an' we'd lose a lot of our swell trade."

Disillusioned.

A Chicago woman went to Scotland expecting to find the proverbial shepherd quoting Virgil and the laborer who had Burns by heart. But she was strangely disillusioned.

She accosted a policeman as to the whereabouts of Carlyle's house.

"Which Carlyle?" the bluecoat asked.

"Thomas Carlyle."

"What does he do?" the policeman wanted to know.

"He was a writer—but he's dead," she faltered.

"Well, madam," the big Scot informed her, "if the man has been dead over five years there's little chance of finding out anything about him in a big city like this.

Not Strangers.

When the late P. T. Barnum was exhibiting his famous Siamese twins they were, as is well remembered, a wonderful sensation.

A certain divine, accompanied by his daughter, was much interested, and their curiosity was unbounded. The young woman asked where the twins were born. Mr. Barnum said that they were born in Siam.

"And are they brothers?" asked the clerical gentleman.

"Oh, yes," said the world's greatest press agent.

"Well, well!" said the visitor. "Think of that, Mary! How kind to allow them to be brothers, and not to have linked a pair of strangers together for life!"

Not to Be Outclassed.

Angus McTavish was a Lowlander, rich and thoroughly Scotch. He had never seen the Highlands or the beautiful lakes of Scotland except from a long distance.

He paid a visit to America, and was shown all the sights. However, he was not impressed, and still thought the Lowlands of Scotland far superior. As a final attempt to show Angus something that would impress him, his friends took him to Niagara Falls. Angus looked at them critically, and, when asked if he did not think them the most marvelous thing he had ever seen, he remarked:

"Aye, mon, they are grand! But do ye ken the auld peacock in Dumfries that had the wooden leg?"

Her Disappointment.

President Howard Elliott, pleading at a dinner in New York for fairer public opinion toward the New Haven lines, said:

"Public opinion, as it has shown itself in the past—it's growing a little kinder now—makes me think of the farm girl.

"A young farm girl asked to have Saturday off in order to go and see a man hanged. Permission was given her and she set out before daybreak, having twenty miles to walk.

"When she returned that evening she was in tears.

"'Why, Milly, what's the matter?' said her mistress.

"'Oh, dear!' sobbed the girl. 'Oh, dear! The man's been reprieved!'"

Suffering by Proxy.

Senator Hughes, of New Jersey, was worried to distraction by the importunities of a person who had a grievance against the Interior Department.

The Senator called up Secretary Lane, who had been worried by the same person.

"Will you listen to his story?" asked Hughes over the telephone.

"I will not," Lane replied.

"Well, then," urged Hughes, desperately, "will you appoint some one to hear the story?"

"Yes," answered Secretary Lane. "I appoint you," and he rang off.

Wouldn't Accuse Him.

The teacher had worked that morning explaining the injustices done by Nero, and believed he had made an impression on the boys. Then he asked questions:

"Now, boys, what do you think of Nero? Do you think he was a good man?"

No one answered. Then the teacher singled out a boy.

"Chancy, what do you think? Do you think he was straight?"

"Well," returned the boy, after a long wait, "he never done nuthin' to me."

They Went Free.

Two Germans who were crossing the Luxembourg frontier declared to the customs officials:

"We have three bottles of red wine each. How much is there to pay?"

"Where is it?" asked one.

"Well, inside us." The official gravely looked at his tariff book and read: "'Wine in casks, 20 shillings: in donkeys' hides, free.' "Gentlemen," he said, looking up, "you can go."

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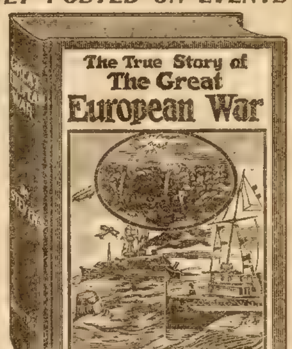

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W. D. BOYCE COMPANY,
504 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois.

Spurs Well Won

Or, THE WOLF PATROL

By John M. Tranter, Scout Master

[Copyright 1914 by W. D. Boyce Co.]

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CHAPTER XIII.

LAYING THE TRAP.

"I HOPE this isn't any sort of hoax, Karl?" remarked the august chief of Culver police as he came alongside the waiting boy.

"You won't find scouts playing practical jokes, anyhow, along this order, chief?" Karl told him.

"Then there is a camp of hobos up here, is there?" demanded the other.

"Yes, and three as tough-looking fellows as you ever saw," the boy went on to say. "They've got rascal stamped on their faces if ever any Weary Willies did. And let me tell you, chief, they've got two bags of something hid under a blanket. We've figured out that it's the stuff they carried away from Mr. Barlow's store."

"It'll be a great day for you boys if that turns out to be so, Karl," said the chief, warmly, "and we'll all take off our hats to the Boy Scouts, make sure of that. But what's this we heard about Dan and Curly and Chunky? Are they in whacks with this hard crowd? I always thought it'd come to such an end, but didn't expect it quite so soon."

At that Karl chuckled, for he could not help it.

"Oh! they're in whacks with the three yeggmen, all right," he said; "but the whacks don't suit them one bit. You see, it's this way: Dan and his lot came out here just to bother the scouts, and break up their camp. They ran across a smoke, and seeing just three ordinary tramps alongside they made friends, thinking p'raps they could get them to held raid our camp. But it turned out to be a boomerang for Dan and his crowd, because the men took a notion not to let them quit, and acted as though they were afraid the boys might size them up and take word to town about them. So all the rest of the day they've kicked the poor fellows around in a shameful way, and made all three wait on them like slaves. Why, the boys are all bruised and banged up till they can hardly crawl around."

"You don't say?" ejaculated the big police officer. "Then it's the first time that hard case of a Dan got a taste of his own medicine, ain't it? But why didn't one of 'em manage to slip away when the tramps happened to be dozing? That Curly Bunch is about as slick an article as they make."

"Well, he wanted to run all right," Karl informed him, "but one of the hobos, a fellow the big leader called Clipper, showed them a gun he had in his hand, and told them he would knock over the first boy that showed any sign of trying to get away. But if you're all ready, chief, let's start up the hill to our camp. Thought I'd take you there first, because all the boys will be wanting to go along for the great crook round-up; and besides we know the way across better from that place."

"Whatever you say goes, Karl," remarked the other quickly. "You've shown such fine skill so far that we just feel as if you could be trusted to the end."

That was really one of the highest compliments Karl had ever received, because he had considerable respect for this big, burly police officer, who had served Culver faithfully half a dozen years. No wonder he thrilled with satisfaction. It was surely worth something to know that the chief approved of all he had done.

"How many men did you fetch along, chief?" he asked, "not that he really wanted to know, for he had mechanically counted them in the beginning, but he felt somewhat confused after hearing the other say what he did.

"Six besides myself," came the reply. "I thought it worth while to hold the day squad and send for the night force as well. Culver hasn't got a single policeman on deck at present, and I hope nothing will happen while we're all up here on this important jaunt."

Seven men, with what assistance the scouts could give them, would certainly seem to be enough of a force to effect the successful capture of the three desperate robbers, Karl thought. At the same time he had sized up the bulldog natures of the tramps and concluded that, if given any fair warning, they would be apt to fight to the last gasp before surrendering, because they knew only too well that they would be "caught with the goods on," as the chief was so fond of saying, and be sent up for a term of years at hard labor.

They did not try to make any sort of speed while climbing the ridge. There was no need of unusual haste, and besides several of the policemen were heavy fellows who would soon be short of wind if put to too severe a test. They could not run about over the hills, jumping and swinging their way, like goats, or Boy Scouts.

In good time they reached the camp. The fire had been allowed to burn low ever since darkness set in, for fear lest in some way its glow might be discovered by the hobos, who were not much more than half a mil eaway. Perhaps Dan might have told the men by now that there was a party of scouts encamped somewhere along the ridge, so after that the suspicious tramps would be more careful than ever, and on the lookout for a sign of neighbors.

When Karl had given the call from the darkness that a member of the Wolf Patrol was approaching, receiving an answer in turn, those in camp were lined up to watch with kindling eyes as the seven stalwart police officers stalked past. A short time was allowed for the men to get their breath, and understand something of the lay of the land, as well as arrange for a system of signals; for it was a settled thing that they would not have an opoprtunity to exchange opinions after once starting forth.

"Do we all go along, Karl?" asked Dolph, eagerly.

"I'm going to give you that opportunity," replied the patrol leader, "unless you'd rather stay at home to guard our supplies?"

Dolph's answer came without any hesitation, showing that he had been thinking it all aover, and made up his mind.

"No," he went to say, firmly. "I've fixed the grub so that a sneaking animal ain't going to find it in a hurry. Fact is, it's hid up in that big tree over there. And besides, Karl, don't you think I want to see all that's going on? Somehow, I seem to be getting over that queer way of feeling shaky, and I do honestly believe I'll overcome it yet."

"I know you will, Dolph, once you begin to feel confidence in yourself," said Karl. "Why, ever so many of your people were brave soldiers years ago, and there's no reason you should be a mollycoddle, except that your womenfolks have tried their best to make you a sissy. Shake hands on that. I'm going to bring you through with flying colors, I give you my word."

"Karl, I believe you will, because you always do whatever you promise," Dolph went on to say, with a little catch in his voice; for it was really a serious period in the life of that boy, when he felt he was about to throw off the old, weak spirit, and assume a new and altogether untried role.

Karl led the way when they trailed out of camp. Every one, man and boy, knew he had to be very careful not to make any sound that would be apt to reach hostile ears, and betray the fact of their coming to the enemy. On this account their progress was very much delayed, for in the darkness they almost had to feel their way along. But slow and sure was Karl's motto, in a case like this, and every rod covered counted for success. In due time they began to catch glimpses of the fire around which the hobos sat, quite at their ease. Perhaps, had they not been taking more strong drink than was good for them, they might have impending peril, away up here in the unbeen more cautious; but such a thing as frequented part of lonely Raccoon Ridge, did not occur to their minds, especially now that they had the three Culver boys safe in their keeping.

Karl had, of course, already laid out his plans, for he was a great fellow to look into the future, and get ready for business. He knew just how he could lead the police into the midst of the camp where the three men were lying around, after eating a heavy supper, and probably washing it down with liberal drinks from the bottles they carried along among their supplies. He was wondering what they could have done about Dan and his two chums, because it was hardly likely that any one of the men would want to sit up and stand guard over the prisoners during the entire night.

That question was settled when Karl obtained his first good look at the camp. And perhaps he was not so very much surprised to discover that the tramps had taken pieces of rope and fastened the three bullies to as many trees, just as Indians might have done in the long-ago days of Daniel Boone. Only instead of ropes they would have used buckskin thongs.

There the boys stood, looking about as miserable and dejected as anything that could be imagined, for they saw no end to this torture and base servitude; and perhaps even dreaded the time when their captors would break camp, lest something even more dreadful might be done with them. However, Karl paid little attention now to the sufferings of Dan; he had something of much more importance to think about and plan for. Behind him came the chief, and back of him was a line of crawling officers, every one of whom kept himself in readiness for a quick, upward jump in case they were discovered, or the signal came to throw off the mask and get down to business. The balance of the scouts brought up the rear; but Dolph was not the very last one, for he had considered that it was much safer to have comrades on both sides of him when crawling along in this way.

Now, the boys had their orders to come to a halt at a certain point, while the seven stout men were expected to continue after their skillful leader, who meant to bring them so near their intended prey that at the last they could really leap upon the tramps. This Karl believed could be done, for he had, on that other occasion, noticed how a deep rut led all the way up to within five feet of the fire, and by creeping along this their object would be accomplished.

Considering that they were mostly big men, and possibly a bit clumsy at that, the police certainly managed to do their part of the work in a manner that reflected great credit on them. Indeed, as Jack afterwards said, they "came pretty near proving themselves as smart as scouts"; and in his opinion that was as neat a compliment as he could pay the chief and his men.

Now they were moving, an inch at a time, hunching along in rotation. Thanks to the rustle of the friendly night wind among the trees, if any slight sounds chanced to be made they did not catch the attention of the sleepy hobos, their wits more or less dulled by their frequent tippling. Karl felt a thrill of expectation when he finally realized that he had led the officers directly into the heart of the hobo camp, and that so far as he could accomplish it, the trap was ready to be sprung. He had certainly done his part splendidly, and the rest would lie with the police, who were accustomed to coping with such desperate

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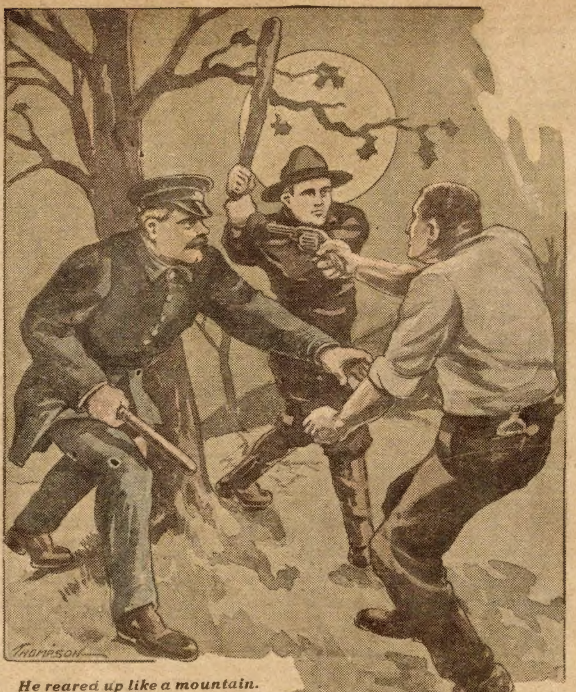

He reared up like a mountain.

fellows as these tramps, and would know just how to go about crushing them. So Karl tapped gently with his toe on the crown of the chief's soft hat to signify that he could take them no farther, and the head of the Culver police force knew from this that it was up to him to give the signal that would bring about a sudden upheaval

CHAPTER XIV.

AFTER THE BATTLE.

A SHRILL whistle sounded.

That was the arranged signal which the police knew full well, and to a man did they spring up, to hurl themselves forward immediately. The three half dozing hobos were taken off their guard. They, of course, made a desperate effort to gain their feet, but in the sudden excitement two of them failed to accomplish this before they were borne to the ground again by the rush of the officers, whose brass buttons and blue suits must have struck terror to the guilty souls of the yeggmen. The big hobo was perhaps more supple than either of his followers, or else he chanced to be just a little farther removed from the point of attack. He reared up like a mountain, and as the chief made headlong for him the desperate rascal flung out his arm, with something gripped between his fingers, that could only be a firearm.

There might have been something of a tragedy right then and there, only for Karl. The leader of the Wolf Patrol had been wise enough to arm himself with a heavy club, so that as soon as he saw the furious hobo about to do the terrible deed he just let fly with this, and his skill was so splendid that the heavy stick, striking the extended arm, gave it such a wrench that the revolver fell to the ground. Of course it was soon all over but the shouting, for when the chief once grappled with the big tramp he made short work of him, especially as two of his men were handy to help out.

Already the scouts had swarmed into the camp, whooping at the top of their lungs, for they felt that their spirits had been bottled up a long while, and they must give vent to their delight, or burst. Karl immediately went over and cut the three prisoners free.

"We saw how you were treated, Dan," he said, as he slashed the ropes that bound the town bully to a tree "and we wanted to do something to help you long before this. But we couldn't till we got a chance to wigwag into town, and have the police come out here."

"Say, did yer do that?" said Dan, staring hard at the other, as though he found it hard to believe his eyes and his ears, while all these wonderful things were happening around him.

Then, finding himself free, and wrought up to a furious pitch by a remembrance of his wrongs, as well as the indignities that had been thrust upon him, he rushed straight at the big leader of the hobos, and struck him squarely in the face with his clenched fist, before the chief could offer any objection. Karl, half expecting some such outburst, had followed close on the heels of Dan, and managed to clutch his arm before he could strike a second time.

"That's enough for you, Dan," he said, sternly. "Because he was a coward and took pleasure in hitting a fellow who couldn't strike back, no need of your copying him. You'll get all the revenge you want in knowing they're booked for a nice, long stay in the penitentiary for breaking into Mr. Barlow's store and robbing it."

"W—what's that ye say, Karl?" gasped Dan, as though he might be learning this fact for the first time. "Are these fellers the robbers? An' mebbe now yer a-goin' tuh tell me what they got hid under them branches might be the boodle they hooked? Huh! guess yuh been an' done sumpin' big this time, Karl. Reckon scouts kin be o' sum use, even if I didn't think so afore. Huh!"

Dan was evidently so thoroughly astonished that he could hardly understand it all. He watched the police snap handcuffs on their three prisoners, and secure the two bags that lay under the branches, the latter heaped there when the yeggs needed their old blankets for sleeping purposes. Day and his two companions were rubbing their sore spots and grunting at a great rate, so that the chief afterwards in pity promised them a chance to ride to town in the wagon, if they could find room.

"What's in the bags, Karl?" asked Jack, eagerly, after he had seen the other taking a peep.

"I expect just what we figured on," replied the patrol leader. "Anyway, I undid a little package that was wrapped in paper, and it turned out to be a gold watch. So Mr. Barlow will be a happy man tonight when he finds that he's recovered pretty much all that was taken from his store."

Karl was so afraid that the police, not being up in woodcraft, might lose their way in trying to find the road, and make all sorts of trouble for themselves, that he consented to accompany them down the slope of Raccoon Ridge. Of course Karl was somewhat tired by this time, but he had plenty of reserve grit, and was ready to put himself out in order to carry the game through. He felt he would sleep easier if he saw not only the three desperate yeggs on their way to the lockup but Dan and his crowd also headed for home. The bully looked glad enough to find himself free from the unpleasant bondage of playing slave to a lot of ugly-tempered tramps. At the same time he seemed uneasy, for he kept looking around him as the police got ready to move out, and acted as if something were bothering him. Now, Karl had his eye on Dan all this while. He believed he could give a pretty good guess as to what was passing through the mind of the bully, who up to now had always despised and hated Karl, just as he did every other decent fellow in Culver. It made Karl smile to see how uneasy the other seemed. Twice he started toward the spot where the leader of the Wolf Patrol was standing, only to pull up short and shake his big head, as though he could not quite decide what his course of action ought to be.

"Hope he does," Karl was muttering under his breath, "because it would be a big concession for Dan to make, and nobody can say what effect it might have on his future. Now he's coming on again. Perhaps he just feels that he's GOT to say something. There's a grain of gratitude working in him."

This time Dan did come straight up, and actually held out his grimy hand.

"Don't know's as yuh keer tuh shake with me, Karl, seein' as how I be'n knockin' o' yuh right along; but yuh done us a good turn when yuh brung the p'lice up this way, an' copped them wolves. Kinder think they'd killed us in the end. Right now I feel like I was half dead. An' some time I hope yuh'll explain tuh me jest how yuh did send word with them flags. Seems like there might be a heap 'bout this here scout business thet I never knowed on."

Karl took the hand that up to that minute had never been raised except in bitter hostility against himself and his chums; yes, and he squeezed it, too, as though he meant every word he said.

"Yes, it's true that you have always been knocking us every chance you got, Dan," he went on to say, quietly, "and at first some of our fellows thought you were only getting what you ought to have, when they saw the hobos kicking you around like dogs. But pretty soon they remembered that you belonged in Culver, and went to school with us away back. And then they were ready to stand up for you, and fight the men, if only I gave the word. But I saw that we'd hardly be able to pull the game off without help, and so I had Brose talk with Walt Baxter in town, using the signal flags. So the chief was called up on the telephone and put wise. And the rest you know, Dan. Hope you get over your hurts soon; and if I can be of any assistance to you in any way, why, don't hesitate to come and ask me, hear that?"

Dan looked keenly into the frank face of the speaker, as though there might be strange thoughts struggling for mastery in his mind.

"Huh! mebbe I will, mebbe I will!" was all he muttered, as he turned and limped over to where his two companions stood, rubbing their bruised bodies, and exchanging sympathy with one another. And Karl was satisfied that he had been able to set Dan thinking as he had never bothered doing before. Something might come of the "bread cast upon the waters," for as Karl was fond of saying, "you never can tell."

Karl went down the slope with the police and their three prisoners. The men were in anything but a happy frame of mind, and there was considerable growling as they were led along, and much hard language was used to air their feelings. When the road was finally reached, and then the bridge where the horses drawing the big wagon had been hitched, it was found that after all there was room for Dan and his mates to crawl in. And after the vehicle, with its load, had disappeared along the pike Karl was disposed to throw up his hat and give a yell, he felt so pleased with the way everything had turned out.

When he once more managed to climb the slope and reach the camp of the scouts he was pretty nearly "all in," as Luke called it. And it was pleasant to know that from now on they could make just as much noise as they wanted, without being in constant dread lest some enemy hear the outbreak, and creep up on them.

Long they sat around a roaring campfire, and again and again did Brose and Karl I have to tell the nature of the message that went across space to old Culver, resulting in the coming of the police, and the subsequent arrest of the yeggmen who had broken into Mr. Barlow's jewelry store. The boys seemed so tremendously excited that it began to look as though they would not crawl into the tent until long after midnight. Dolph had once more secured the food supplies from the crotch of the tree, and reported that nothing had been stolen while they were all away. Karl was secretly pleased to see that the latest recruit, and the tenderfoot of the patrol, was acting very differently than he had at times in the past. He seemed to have obtained a grip on himself, and, finding that it felt good to enjoy such confidence, was bent on carrying it right along. As Karl had predicted, it might not be so very long before Dolph, from being a "mollycoddle," would turn out to be one of the boldest fellows in Culver Troop. Such changes do take place, once a boy wakes up and finds himself.

"There's only one thing left to bother us, fellows," Dolph was saying, late in the night, when some of the scouts were

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beginning to yawn at a terrific rate.

"You mean the mystery about that stolen stuff?" suggested Jack. "I suppose now we'll have to bend our wonderful talents to solving that puzzle, eh, Karl?"

"Oh! that won't be so very hard, perhaps," remarked the other, with a knowing nod and smile. "Fact is, I've arranged things already in the shape of a little trap, leaving out a tempting article in the shape of half a stick of bacon, and that package of gingersnaps, with my camera focused so as to cover it, and a cord fixed that will start things moving just when the thief goes to take the grub. Just pile in and get under the blankets, the lot of you; and if you are suddenly wakened by a white flash don't get scared and believe a storm is coming down on us, for it'll only be my flashlight going off and taking a picture of the thief."

He remained outside long after all the rest had retired. But finally Karl, too, crept under the flap of the crowded tent, found where his blanket lay, and curled up, quite satisfied that before another dawn his little detective camera would in all probability be called on to stamp the identity of the mysterious animal that was creeping into camp and carry-[illegible] off their food.

[illegible]e boys were restless, and there was [illegible]e or less floundering around among [illegible] blankets for half an hour or so, but [illegible] the end all became silent. The min[illegible] continued to creep on. Possibly two [illegible]s after Karl had lain down, he, as [illegible] as all the others, was suddenly [illegible] by a howl and a vivid flash, fol[illegible] intense darkness.

CHAPTER XV.

[illegible] FLASHLIGHT PICTURE.

"C[illegible]HAT was that?" called out [illegible], suddenly sitting up as though [illegible] actions were governed by a galvanic battery.

"Whoop! you got the thief's picture that time, Karl!" cried Jack, grasping the meaning of the intense white flash, and the strange howl of fright accompanying it.

Karl was already crawling out of the tent and upon emerging his first act was to snatch up some fine tinder he had kept handy for just that purpose, and throw the same upon the smoldering embers of the fire. Immediately it took hold, and from darkness the camp became quite light, so that the other scouts could see each other. Clad in their pajamas they were doubtless a queer-looking group, but all were too much interested in what was going on to bother laughing. It was quickly discovered that the thief had been there, and when that brilliant as well as unexpected flash had come, it must have given him such a scare that nothing had been carried away, because the strip of bacon, as well as the package of tempting gingersnaps lay there, though not just where Karl had placed them as bait. The trailing cord told that the trap had been sprung, and Karl's first act after throwing the fuel on the fire, had been to close the vent of his camera.

"I hope I got a good picture that time," he remarked, laughingly.

"Yes, and we're all waiting to know what sort of beast it is that keeps hangin' around our camp, trying to make a livin' off us," Luke went on to say.

"Well, hold up a little while, and you'll know," Karl told him.

"You'll sure develop the film right away tomorrow, I hope, and not wait till you get back home?" said Foxey, looking at Karl queerly.

"Why, yes, that's what I fetched along my daylight developing tank for, you know, Foxey. And bending his head lower, so that none of the others could hear, the leader of the Wolf Patrol went on to whisper: "I sort of guess you're on to the racket, Foxey, but please don't say a thing to the rest, will you? I expect to give Luke and the others the surprise of their lives."

"All right, Karl," Foxey replied, with a chuckle. "I'm keeping as close a mouth as a clam at low water. Only get busy as soon after breakfast as you can."

"I promise you, Foxey," the other told him, and that closed the incident.

There was a little more talking. Dolph, for instance, was still worried.

"Suppose the thing comes back again after that bacon, Karl," he remarked, "and not finding it where it fell, starts to rooting all around the camp? Now, it might even sneak into the tent, if it was very hungry, and take a nip at one of our legs. I can stand considerable, I think, but I don't just like the idea of being nibbled at with the sharp teeth of a fox, or something like that."

Whereupon Karl laughed a little and nodded his head in an encouraging way.

"Believe me, Dolph, there isn't the least danger of such a thing," he said, impressively, and then with a chuckle he added: "Don't you agree with me, Foxey?"

"I sure do, Karl," came the answer, without any hesitation. "That flash gave the sly thief too big a scare for him to come prowling around again tonight. I know I mean to get what sleep I can between now and daylight, which ain't so very far off, let me tell you, Dolph."

Reassured by these remarks, Dolph seemed to fling away his fears, for he crawled under his blanket, and in a short time was heard to breathe regularly like one who was fast asleep. Nothing happened during the two hours that elapsed before the first streaks of dawn came upon them. There is generally one early bird among every bunch of lads who seems unable to keep quiet after the night has fled, though such hawks are the exception, as growing boys seem never to get enough sleep. And so, while there was really no need of their being aroused until the sun had peeped above the horizon, it came to pass that breakfast was well under way when that event occurred.

Of course nearly all the conversation was connected with the stirring events of the proceeding day and night. In turn they pictured the amazement of the good people of Culver when the news was circulated by means of the little weekly paper that happened to issue on this very morning, and everybody learned what a prominent part the Boy Scout patrol had played in the discovery and capture of the desperate yeggmen who had robbed Mr. Barlow's store. It was also pleasant to think of the delight that must have seized upon the jeweler of Culver, whom everybody liked, when he learned that his property had been recovered.

"Boy Scout stock is going to take a big jump today, fellows!" declared Luke, as he helped himself again to one of the flapjacks which he had assisted in frying in the two skillets; and which, if a trifle heavy, were pronounced A Number One by everybody—boys are not apt to be too critical when on an outing, even though most of them might have sniffed and eyed some of those "pancakes" suspiciously, had they been eating at a table covered with a white cloth, and with all the surroundings of home comforts.

"And let me tell you, that second patrol will be a dead sure thing before another week rolls past," Jack announced. "What Brose did with his wigwag business is going to be the making of Culver Troop. We all take off our hats to our signal-sender, don't we fellows?"

"Three cheers for Brose!" cried Luke, enthusiastically; for strange to say, not one of them seemed to feel the slightest jealousy because fortune had picked out the scout in question to receive high honors. And the cheers were given with a will, because they felt that there was now no reason why their lively, boyish spirits should be held in check, since not only had the hobos been taken in hand by the Culver police, but Dan Brittles and his cronies had also gone back to town, their claws drawn.

"Here comes Karl out of the tent, and I just guess now he's been and developed that film," remarked Foxey, presently. "How about it, Mr. Patrol Leader? Do you think you got the thief, all right?"

Karl flashed him a quick look and nodded assent.

"Wait for a few hours," he replied, "till it dries enough for me to print a proof, and you'll see; but I want everybody to keep away from where I hung it, on penalty of getting into trouble."

They readily promised, knowing that Karl only wished to give them some kind of a surprise. And of course all sorts of queer guesses were made as to what species of animal it would turn out to be. Foxey took part in this game of trying to hit upon the class of animal. Indeed, it was Foxey who suggested the most improbable things, and when the others jeered him for being so wild, he would laugh, and give Karl a sly wink that rather mystified the rest.

A lot of things were done that morning, for the scouts had not come to Raccoon Ridge just to loaf around camp and kill time. Every fellow had his mind filled with certain "stunts" connected with the many things a scout should know, and which he had set out to become proficient in. Brose was up on the peak "talking" with the town boy who had the sprained ankle, and who would be apt to tell him how the news had thrilled all Culver that morning. Foxey was prowling around looking for the tracks of small animals like rabbits, squirrels, 'coons, or mink near the spring, and referring frequently to certain notes he carried, by means of which he might be able to distinguish one from another. Then there was Luke experimenting with a novel contrivance which he had read about, whereby he hoped to get a spark and start a fire without a match. Fires were his hobby, and he could hardly keep his mind away from them. Joe, having nothing else to do, was practicing with his hands, and in imagination blowing all the well known bugle calls, from reveille to taps. It would be a joyous day for him when he was put in possession of a brand new nickel-plated bugle, with which he could enliven the time, and carry out the orders of the patrol leader.

All at once, Karl, who had been busy elsewhere, came hurrying toward them, waving something over his head.

"It's the print of our animal thief!" exclaimed Luke, jumping up.

"Gather around fellows, and all look at once!" said Karl; and waiting until he had them fixed just as he wanted, he quickly held the plain print before their eager eyes. A wild shout went up.

"Why, it ain't an animal after all, but a feller!" cried Joe King.

"Seems to me I ought to know that chap!" gasped Luke. "Why, would you b'lieve it, that's my little brother, Hiram! Karl, what's the answer?"

"Why, it's as plain as anything," replied the other. "He's so wild to join us scouts that he just made up his mind he'd follow us up here, and watch all we did. It was wrong of him to take our bread, but the poor fellow was hungry, and thought as his mother had baked it he had some right to it. Now, I'm going to call out and try to stir him up. Anybody that shows a desire to be a scout, and is willing to go to all that trouble to learn what scouts do, ought to be allowed to join. So come along with me, Luke, and we'll see if we can make Hiram hear. He's going to stay with us, and enjoy himself as long as we're here."

After all it was not a difficult thing getting in touch with the hiding boy, for Hiram was very hungry, and the delightful odor of coffee, since dinner was in process of cooking, had drawn him near the camp again. He heard what Karl shouted, and quickly popped up out of a neighboring bush. And there could hardly be found a happier boy than that young Hiram was, when he heard how he was surely going to be admitted into the ranks of the troop as soon as the new patrol could be formed.

Since their troubles vanished with the discovery that it had after all not been a wild animal that was so persistently invading the camp, it is just as well that we take leave of Karl and his chums at this point. What we have seen of them should be enough to convince the most skeptical that the Wolf Patrol must presently become a very successful organization, and that when the Culver Troop of Boy Scouts finally appeared in public, dressed in their new khaki suits, with Dolph carrying a fine drum, and Joe King handling his shining bugle, they made a very impressive appearance. And remembering how it had been chiefly through the means of wigwag work on the part of these same scouts that the Culver police had been enabled to descend on the bold hobo robbers and effect their capture, the town people after that took considerable stock in the organization, even Dolph's mother being forced to admit that she could see a great change for the better in her boy, who had once been the tenderfoot scout.

Next week's Ledger will contain another thrilling story for boys, called "Billy Barth's Pluck; or, A Young Detective's Trail," by Captain Jack Judson. It is a splendid boy detective story. Dont miss it.

The End.

* * *

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This message is for the 6,000,000 families engag[illegible] in the business of farming

There are a great many publications that tell you how to raise bigger crops and leave you to dispose of them to the best advantage. We start where they leave off and tell you how to market your crops---how to get the most money out of them. Where other papers deal with the producing end of the farm, we take up the selling end.

We help you make your farm a source of profit, so that you can make improvements on your farm and provide home conveniences---home comforts---the things that make your family happy---that make the sons and daughters want to stay on the farm.

Well Balanced

YOU hear people talk every day about this, that or the other being "well balanced." What does it mean?"

You hear it said of the lawyer, doctor, judge, minister, teacher or editor that he has a "well balanced" mind. Why? Because his actions, decisions, practice, teachings or writings reflect good judgment, absence of prejudice, honesty and due respect for the rights of others. He has a well balanced mind.

The banker is considered a safe custodian for the public funds and private accounts only when he shows—through his dealings with the public—that he is honest himself and a good judge of credits and the honesty of other men. Then only is he successful. He is called a "well balanced" financier.

The stock of goods in a store is "well balanced" because the owner bought what his customers need, require and ask for; and just enough. At the end of the season he is not "long" on some goods. Nor has he been out of others for some time. He has made money. He is a successful merchant because he carried a "WELL BALANCED" assortment.

First, last and always is the business of farming considered successful when the farmer demonstrates that he is well balanced by arranging his business so that it is continuous throughout the year. When money is coming in all the time with which to meet the expenses that are necessary; when his operations are adapted to his soil, his climate and the demands of his available market; when his buildings are good, his fields highly productive and his livestock in keeping with the rest of his farm; when his farm is a source of income rather than a cause for expense; when his children want to stay with him and become farmers themselves rather than leave him for something else—then, and only then, is his farming business well balanced.

Why is THE FARMING BUSINESS a well balanced publication?

Because it is made for every member of the family engaged in the business of farming. No line of business or trade exists in which every member of the family works at the same business, except farming. Father, mother, son and daughter all do their share; also all employes.

THE FARMING BUSINESS is well balanced because one-third of the reading matter appeals directly to the men; one-third, including fiction, to women, and one-third to both the men, women, sons and daughters working on, or deriving an income from, farming.

All persons who have seen a copy of THE FARMING BUSINESS express themselves as pleased with it mechanically. They say it is the good style, easy-to-read type. The illustrations mean something. The headings over the articles are to the point. The name of the paper tells what it stands for in three words. All of which is only saying that the whole paper is well balanced.

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